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BATTLE REPORT

BATTLE REPORT SERIES

VOLUME I: Pearl Harbor to Coral Sea, by Commander Walter Karig, USNR, and Lieutenant Welbourn Kelley, USNR.

VOLUME II: The Atlantic War, by Commander Walter Karig, USNR, Lieutenant Earl Burton, USNR, and Lieutenant Stephen Freeland, USNR.

VOLUME III: Pacific War: Middle Phase, by Captain Walter Karig, USNR, and Commander Eric Purdon, USNR.

VOLUME IV: The End of an Empire, by Captain Walter Karig, USNR, Lieutenant Commander Russell L. Harris, USNR, and Lieutenant Commander Frank A. Manson, USN.

VOLUME V: Victory in the Pacific, by Captain Walter Karig, USNR, Lieutenant Commander Russell L. Harris, USNR, and Lieutenant Commander Frank A. Manson, USN.

VOLUME VI: The War in Korea, by Captain Walter Karig, USNR, Commander Malcolm W. Cagle, USN, and Lieutenant Commander Frank A. Manson, USN.

BATTLE REPORT

VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC

Prepared from Official Sources by

Captain Walter Karig, USNR

Lieutenant Commander Russell L. Harris, USNR
and

Lieutenant Commander Frank A. Manson, USN



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The illustrations for this book were selected and captioned by Captain E. John Long, USNR, assisted by C. Earl Cooley, SP (P) 1/c, USNR, and Miss C. June Kile. Charts and maps were drawn especially by Mr. Thomas J. Salane under the supervision of the authors. All pictures are Official Navy Photographs unless otherwise designated. Official Combat Art work is indicated by the name of the artist.

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Author's Foreword

IN PRESENTING this, the fifth and final volume of **BATTLE REPORT**, the senior officer of the project reports "Mission completed," but with a sense of inadequacy in the accomplishment.

Orders to prepare a nontechnical narrative of the Navy's war, as much as possible in the words of the men who participated in the actions described, were issued to me by the late Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox early in 1943. For the first time, history was to be written as it was being made, not for propaganda purposes but objectively, factually—"the bad with the good," in Mr. Knox's own words. The project was to be parallel to, and complementing, the more detailed operational history compiled for postwar publication under the supervision of Captain Samuel Eliot Morison, USNR.

The five volumes herewith completed were written as collateral duty by me and my associates. We had our own regular jobs to do, duties which took each of us overseas and across country, but these interruptions only furnished us with the taste and smell of conflict on the seas and over them which gave our efforts to tell the Navy's war story some flavor, we hope, of authenticity. Written as duty, the books have not enriched the authors save in experience. All royalties, and, too, the cash difference to the publisher between actual cost and wholesale price, have been and will continue to be paid into the Navy's public welfare agencies.

Secretary James Forrestal and John Sullivan each in turn confirmed the orders and purposes laid down by Mr. Knox. Fleet Admirals Ernest J. King and Chester W. Nimitz, and their successor as Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Louis E. Denfeld, gave us access not only to the Navy's files but to their own records and reminiscences. These six gentlemen, who accorded me and my associates their friendship as well as their assistance, are but representative of hundreds of men and women in the Navy, Marines, Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, in civilian war work, and in the navies of our Allies, who contributed whatever they were asked to make the record as complete as we were able to achieve it in limited space.

Some of those who contributed more largely will be named later, but I wish first to say an identifying word about my associates, all of them civilians who had tossed aside their careers to put on the Navy's blue.

"Plank-owners" in the BATTLE REPORTS, besides the undersigned, are the picture editor, Captain E. John Long, and Chief Yeoman Elvina J. Sudol. Miss Sudol reported for work at the beginning of the project and typed the three million words that were boiled down to the ultimate text of the five volumes, besides checking all names, and dates, and proof-reading the printed galleys.

She and Lieutenant Commander Frank A. Manson, coauthor of Volumes IV and V, have decided to make the Navy their careers and now sign themselves USN. Commander Eric Purdon, coauthor of Volume III, and the appreciative skipper of the series still proudly cling to their USNR designation, although still on active duty. Nowhere else will either of those sets of initials be found after any name in this book, despite objections from some personally aggrieved individuals in both categories, for to the editor's mind the distinction between Regular and Reserve was erased in action.

The first BATTLE REPORT, *Pearl Harbor to the Coral Sea*, was published in December, 1944. The coauthor in its preparation was Lieutenant Welbourn Kelley, in the civilian life to which he has returned one of radio's most gifted and industrious authors.

Lieutenants Stephen L. Freeland and Earl Burton were assigned as collaborators on the second volume, *The Atlantic War*, cited several times by General of the Army Eisenhower in his book *Crusade In Europe*. Freeland and Burton had both been newspapermen; both had participated in some of the Atlantic's most vigorous actions. Freeland is now a director of civilian public intelligence in Germany for the occupation forces and Burton heads a news weekly's bureau in Toronto.

Commander Purdon had been a young novelist of promise before the war, and by whim an explorer in Inner Mongolia. He commanded several types of small combat craft in the Navy during the war and took up the pen, metaphorically, after relinquishing the tiller of USS PC 1264, one of the two combatant ships manned predominantly by Negroes. After completion of Volume III, *Pacific War, Middle Phase*, Purdon did a tour of duty with Central Intelligence and is now on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations, assistant to the undersigned.

Lieutenant Commanders Manson and Russell L. Harris were chosen

as collaborators on Volumes IV and V. Manson, a veteran of the Philippine and Okinawa battles who knows about Kamikazes from close contact, was a schoolteacher before the war and now, as a permanent naval officer, is also on CNO's staff. Harris came into the Navy upon graduating from Notre Dame University to command minesweepers and subchasers. He is now Public Affairs Officer in Genoa, Italy, for the State Department.

Captain E. John Long, who selected the illustrations and supervised the drafting of maps and charts for the series, saw action in the Marshalls between tours of duty as Officer in Charge of the Pictorial and Combat Art Sections, Office of Navy Public Relations. He was an editor of *National Geographic* magazine before the war and, now on inactive duty, is a magazine writer.

For their very able assistance and many contributions to the final volume grateful acknowledgment is due to: Lieutenants Frederick M. Granger and Herbert J. Gimpel of the Ships Section, of the Office of Public Information; Captain John B. Heffernan of the Office of Naval History and his able assistant, Lieutenant Commander Shirley R. Baraw; Lieutenant Herbert C. Carroll, for his assistance in tracking down former staff members of Commander Third Fleet; Miss Loretta I. MacCrimdle and Miss Barbara A. Gilmore of the Historical Records Section of the Navy; Commanders Eric Purdon and Harry E. Cross of the Office of Chief of Naval Operations; Commander Robert J. Bulkley, Jr.; Miss T. K. Yarborough, Mr. Wilbur J. Nigh, and Miss Sue Wallace of the Historical Records Section, Department of the Army; Mr. M. Hamlin Cannon of the Historical Division of the Army for his valuable help on the Leyte campaign; Miss Margaret Emerson, also of the Army's Historical Section who plied us with facts and documents; Dr. Chauncey Sanders and Dr. Edith Rodgers of the Air Historical Office, Department of the Air Force; Rear Admiral Ralph A. Ofstie, head of the Naval Analysis Division of United States Strategic Bombing Survey; Rear Admiral Edward C. Ewen, Director of Public Relations; Misses Philibert, Estelle and Helene, of the Public Information Section of the Secretary of Defense; and Lieutenant Janus Poppe, Royal Netherlands Naval Reserve, and Theodore S. Amussen and John S. Lamont of Rinehart & Company, and Miss Julie Eidesheim who styled the entire series.

WALTER KARIG

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PART ONE

The Conquerors Conquered

*They fight not for the lust of conquest. They
fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate.*

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

CHAPTER ONE

In Final Retrospect

I

IN THE CONTEMPLATION of history, wherein all decision and action are eternally frozen in patterns of accomplishment or failure, it is difficult to realize that in its making history was a plastic thing, shaped by the judgments of men.

Especially in wars, the judgments are produced by men under awful compulsion and forever based on imperfect knowledge. The adversaries are like wrestlers on their feet, pressing each against the other, feeling for a point of weakness, alert to bring full weight to bear upon it when found but having to risk quick and perhaps disastrous retaliation in consequence.

So it was during the War in the Pacific. The pressure on Japan, after the hammerlock blow at Midway was broken, was always firm, always constant, but the pressure points varied. The war was not fought according to a rigidly conceived plan, minutely blueprinted and inflexibly executed. Planning was an organic thing that varied, and grew, and was summarily altered by circumstance. Planning was a fluid thing and its execution was not rigid till the ultimate application.

Easily forgotten, but not to be forgotten, is this fact obscured by collective nouns like "the Navy" or "the Third Fleet," the "Joint Chiefs" or "the Combined Chiefs of Staff." These names conceal men, men indeed trained for the moment and the task, but otherwise human beings endowed with no superhuman attributes. The broad planning was done in Washington. From the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in possession of all available facts on all fronts, the directives went out to General MacArthur or Admiral Nimitz to do this or that; how it was to be done was their problem, their planning. From them, the orders went to the tactical commanders of fleet and army, and so to the captains of ships and colonels of regiments, whose judgments in contact with the enemy were the final shaping of the original plan. The exception was the Twentieth Air Force, which refused to be subjected to filtered orders and obeyed only the plans communi-

cated or confirmed by Washington headquarters. But in actual effect the Air Force, even the B-29s of the Twentieth, had to be a projection of sea power, based on and stemming from the Navy's command of the ocean and its islands, so the co-operation of the two components was not impaired in effecting the master plan.

For the Pacific war was primarily a naval war, because that ocean is more than twice as big as the Atlantic, more than twenty times as large as the United States. From San Francisco to Honolulu is as far as from Newfoundland to Ireland. From Honolulu to Manila is over 5,000 miles, from Tokyo to Guadalcanal, 3,400.

War is as much a matter of geography, too, as it is of men and weapons.

2

The Pacific is circled with fire. Beneath that stretching world of water giant subterranean forces forever seek points of escape in the earth's hard crust. The smoldering safety valves of the earth's boiling core are the volcanoes that ring this great ocean.

As a look at the map will demonstrate, the Pacific Ocean does not have its far shore on the continent of Asia. Geographically its western boundary is marked by a huge arc of islands. To the north are the Aleutians, which string counterclockwise toward the Kuriles, the northern outposts of the Japanese Empire. From here the line runs through the Home Islands of Japan down the Ryukyu chain to Formosa, the far point of the arc. Then the line starts to curve back—through the Philippines, through the Moluccas, through the massive island of New Guinea, through the Solomons, and finally ending in the countless scattered islands of fabled Polynesia.

This sweeping rim of islands was born of fire and upheaval. Here the compulsive forces inside the earth found a line of weakness in the globe's rocky skin. Here the floor of the ocean bulged in great volcanic surges. On the eastern side of the Pacific this arc of fire is matched by the volcanoes that string from Alaska to the tip of South America. Of all the volcanoes known in the world today more than three-quarters of them are found in and around the Pacific.

The ocean enclosed by the western half of this fiery circumference is not empty. It contains thousands of flyspeck islands which, because of their small size, are known collectively as Micronesia. The combined land area of all these islands comes to less than 2,000 square miles, about the

size of the state of Delaware, yet these slivers of land are scattered over an area nearly the size of the United States. Most of the islands are low coral atolls. Some, however, push up to more imposing elevations and a few sprout volcanic peaks as high as 3,000 feet.

Micronesia begins with the Palau Islands which lie about five hundred miles east of Mindanao, the southernmost island of the Philippines and about the same distance north of Vogelkop, the western tip of New Guinea, which is shaped like the head of a bird and whose Dutch name means just that. From here the islands stretch eastward nearly 3,000 miles to form the Caroline, the Marshall, and Gilbert groups. Perpendicular to these, the Marianas and Bonins string northward toward Japan. The two island chains form a huge inverted T, hanging from Tokyo.

This, then, is the paradoxically named Pacific, the area of conflict.

3

The Pacific has long known tragedy. Sometimes the earth shakes in violent spasms and great walls of water rush in over whole cities, over whole islands. Sometimes volcanoes spew out ash and lava in azoic fury. Sometimes the heavy, listless air of the doldrums stirs to life and giant twisting winds are born.

But this is the blind violence of nature, and these tragedies are nothing compared to the tragedy that man brought to the Pacific accompanied by shouts of "Banzai!"

During the first months of the war the Japanese threw their net of empire over the whole Western Pacific. Quickly they pushed around the rim of fire from Formosa through the Solomons. Just as quickly they enmeshed in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere the Netherlands East Indies—those chunks of Asia recently, geologically speaking, broken off from the mother continent—Malaya, Indo-China, Siam, Burma, and the vital coast areas of China. Micronesia was already theirs by mandate with the exception of a few islands which were quickly gathered in.

Within a few months Japan was bloated with conquest and full of hollow cockiness. She had all she needed, all she wanted. If things could have stopped right there, she would have been content. Yet she knew that was not possible. She had provoked the wrath of too many people.

Japan hoped, however, that her expanded empire would be invulnerable to attack. She knew that sooner or later the Allies would counter-

attack, but she hoped to deal them such a crushing blow that they would be only too happy to negotiate a compromise peace.

Soon after the first stunning bludgeonings of war that had sent them reeling back to Australia and Hawaii, the Allies started laying the groundwork—or perhaps the term “ocean work” would be better—for an offensive that would carry them to the Imperial Palace itself.

The arena of conflict was divided into two main areas: the Southwest Pacific Area, under the supreme command of General Douglas MacArthur, and the Pacific Ocean Area, with Admiral Chester W. Nimitz as top boss. Of the two, Nimitz’s was by far the more extensive. It stretched from Hawaii to the Philippine Sea, from the Aleutians to New Caledonia. It included the Solomons, the Carolines, the Marianas, Formosa, and Japan itself. MacArthur’s domain included Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines.

The first counterattacks against the Japanese were initiated in the jungled Solomons, part of the fiery, volcanic rim of the Pacific, where forces under Vice Admiral William Halsey pushed up the slot from bloody, muddy Guadalcanal to Empress Augusta Bay. During this offensive, which spanned more than a year—from August, 1942, until November, 1943—some of the fiercest naval battles of the war were fought.¹ The green hell of the Solomons will also be long remembered by the Marine and Army troops who completely shattered the myth of the invincibility of the Japanese soldier.

Meanwhile naval and ground forces, both Australian and American, of General MacArthur started the long push, rather the leapfrog hops, westward along the New Guinea coast.

In Hawaii Admiral Nimitz prepared a tremendous catapult of sea-air power which gathered tension like a huge spring being wound tighter and tighter; men and ships and planes were fused into a fighting force. In the autumn of 1943 the spring was tripped, and the force released. First the Gilbert Islands were flattened, but not until the Marines had been badly bloodied at Tarawa. Then the Marshalls were quickly seized. At the same time Truk and the Marianas felt the stinging wrath of carrier attacks.

With great hammer blows from the east the Japanese were being pounded back on the anvil of Asia. And the anvil did not give. From Burma and China Allied air and ground forces hit at the swarming invaders. Japan was surrounded, isolated, alone. In no direction could she

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume III, *Pacific War: Middle Phase*.

turn for help. Merciless herself, she could expect no mercy. Her periphery of conquest was to become her self-imposed noose. Each day it was drawn tighter and tighter by determined hands.

4

In Washington the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the strategic directors of the war, decided in March, 1944, that the first major objective of the Pacific War would be the Luzon-Formosa-China Coast triangle. If this were captured, Japan would be split off from her conquests. The last vestige of sea traffic—traffic that our submarines had long been biting at with gratifying success—between the Home Islands and the Southern Resource Area would be choked off. Not only would the fruit wither but the vine itself would die.

In order to project our forces into this vital area it was necessary to gain control of the Central Pacific. The Gilberts and Marshalls had been a beginning. Now there remained the Carolines, the Marianas to the north, and the Palaus to the west.

Assured in the possession of the greatest massed sea power in history, Nimitz turned to on the task. The Carolines were neutralized, not by a frontal attack on the central bastion of Truk but by occupying Guam, Saipan, and Tinian in the Marianas. Here sea and air bases were quickly established for operations against Japanese sea routes and for long-range air attacks on the Homeland.

The forces of the Pacific Ocean Areas (the official name for Nimitz's bailiwick) skirted the Carolines entirely and moved against the Palaus with the object of establishing control of the approaches to the Philippines and Formosa.

The first seven months of 1944 were decisive in the Central Pacific. Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Guam, Tinian, Peleliu all fell in succession. Japanese carrier-air power had been broken during the Battle of the Philippine Sea, in June,¹ when His Imperial Majesty's Combined Fleet sortied to dispute the landings in the Marianas. The Japanese never recovered from the loss of practically all their trained air groups. After that the Central Pacific became an American lake. Only an occasional enemy submarine disputed the claim.

MacArthur, meanwhile, had negotiated the full length of New

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV, *The End of an Empire*.

Guinea's north coast and had arrived at Morotai in the Moluccas, the legendary Isles of Spice.

The over-all plan was for MacArthur's forces to land in southern Mindanao and then, once land-based air facilities were established, to invade Leyte. From there MacArthur's air force was to neutralize the airfields of Luzon while Nimitz's forces landed on Formosa and at Amoy on the China Coast.

For a while consideration was given to by-passing the Philippines entirely with a direct attack on Formosa, but this plan was abandoned for many and complicated reasons, not the least compelling of which was MacArthur's determination to redeem his promise to the Filipinos. There was also some thought of turning the full weight of all the Pacific forces northward in a direct attack on Japan proper but this, too, was shelved after lively debate.

With the mid-September movements into the Palaus and Morotai fighting in the two theaters became contiguous. Before this the two area commanders had operated separately each using his own available forces. Occasionally Nimitz would lend a bit of extra naval support to MacArthur, such as at Hollandia, but for the most part the affairs of the two theaters did not overlap. Now it was different.

To protect the simultaneous operations in the Palaus and Morotai, Nimitz sent his fast carriers to sweep Mindanao and the Central Philippines. The Japanese were found to be soft, weakened more than was thought possible. So plans were quickly changed. Instead of MacArthur's forces first invading southern Mindanao, laboriously setting up airstrips and then invading Leyte under an umbrella of land-based air, it was decided to by-pass Mindanao completely and give the Japs a direct solar plexus punch at Leyte with carrier-based planes furnishing the necessary support and protection.

The decision made, other changes quickly followed.

MacArthur pointed out that he thought it now feasible, with the Japanese weakened in the air, to proceed from the Leyte landing to the Philippine knockout blow—the assault on the main island of the archipelago, Luzon. The two landings would have to be hyphenated by the seizure of Mindoro, an important island on the line of advance, where highly useful airdromes could be set up.

MacArthur estimated that the Central Philippines should be cleared of the enemy and Manila captured by February. This, he maintained,

would make the Formosa operation unnecessary and the forces that were to be used for that campaign could be used for operations further to the northward. Meanwhile the liberation of the Philippines would be completed and Borneo and all the islands of the Indies would be blocked off from Japan.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred in this. They directed that Luzon be seized and at the same time canceled the projected operation against Formosa.

That left the forces of the Central Pacific free to push up to the threshold of Japan itself.

5

Nature has provided two steppingstone approaches to Japan from the south. One is the Bonin Islands group that lies on a direct line between the Marianas and Tokyo, a line that was soon to be well grooved by B-29s. The other is the Ryukyu chain that strings from Formosa to Kyushu, southernmost of the Home Islands.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Nimitz to seize a steppingstone in each of these groups, first in the Bonins and then in the Ryukyus. Target dates were set for January 20 and March 1.

All this was decided by early October, before the invasion of Leyte.

Then on October 20, 1944, thousands of American troops spilled ashore over the Leyte beaches in an amphibious operation larger than any before attempted in the Pacific. All the resources, all the men and weapons of both theaters were focused on this one small island. The great promise to the Filipinos had been fulfilled. The Americans had returned.

The Japanese, recognizing the threat to their southern empire, were quick to throw their fleet into battle in a desperate attempt to send the Americans staggering back into the Philippine Sea, as the Western Pacific at this point is called. As detailed in Volume IV of BATTLE REPORT, the Third and Seventh Fleets broke the back of Japanese naval power as it attempted a complicated three-pronged drive on Leyte Gulf. The once-proud Imperial Navy was reduced to a heterogeneous collection of surface raiders, and that largely immobilized for lack of the fuel denied it by the Allied submarine blockade.

But with the Japanese Fleet out of the way for all practical purposes, it did not mean that the job of the United States Navy was done, that its

ships were out of danger, that it could transport and land troops wherever necessary. The Japanese, during the Battle for Leyte Gulf, had unveiled a new and lethal weapon—the suicide crash diver, the Kamikaze. This weapon of desperation was to become the most feared, and the most dangerous, weapon of the Pacific War. For ten long bloody months it was to plague our ships from the Philippines to the shores of Japan, from the China Sea to the supposed safety of Ulithi lagoon.

Yes, we had planted a determined foot in the middle of the Philippines, we had decimated the Japanese Fleet, we were well on the road to Tokyo, but the war was far from over.

In fact, its bitterest fighting lay ahead.

CHAPTER TWO

Blood on the Wind

The life of the warrior is as the cherry blossom which blooms for a few days in the spring and then falls to the ground.

From an old Japanese poem

I

HIROSHI OBATA looked out of his window at the Luzon hills. They were a deep purple in the misty light of early morning. To the eastward the sky flushed crimson. Obata noted every detail of the scene before him, every shifting shade of light, every hill, every tree. He breathed deeply of the fresh morning air as he ran his hands over his naked torso. He was like a man trying to absorb the world through all his senses at once, and there was good reason, too, for all the rest of his mortal life had to be compressed into this one day.

He picked up the silk sash that lay on the table beside his bed and started wrapping it tightly around his waist. The sash was white—white, the color of death, the color of dedication. The white scarf he would wear around his head. When he pushed his plane over into its last dive, the wind would whistle like a thousand devils and the scarf would stream like a triumphant banner.

From the nearby airfield came the splutter of engines.

Kamikaze! Yes, it was the only way, the way of the warrior, the way of the Samurai. Final victory would come only with one's own death—life-giving death. And every Japanese must be ready to give his life to the Emperor and the nation according to the ancient code of Bushido. Of course the Americans had more guns, more ships, more planes. In these material things they were superior. But they were not superior spiritually! The machines of war that the Americans had brought across the Pacific to threaten the empire would be—must be—shattered by the bodies and spirit of the invincible sons of Amaterasu, heaven-illuminating goddess.

All this Hiroshi Obata knew, yet he felt sad as he looked down at

the letters he had written the night before: letters to his wife, to his mother, and to his young son. He had written that "tomorrow I am determined to destroy with my own body those enemy craft which have been attacking our sacred soil. I shall strike without returning." He had then written of his memories of home, of his youth, of Japan. He had recalled an ancient poem: "If we speak to men of the poetic spirit of Japan, we mean the scent of the mountain cherry flowers at dawning." This, he thought, was particularly appropriate, for the cherry blossom was the symbol used by his Kamikaze unit. When these letters arrived in Japan he would have long since known the supreme ecstasy of the warrior's death in battle. He would have already taken his honored place with the immortals of the Yasukuni Shrine. He would be a god, a protecting deity of Japan.

He pulled on his brown gabardine flying suit, and glanced at his watch: six o'clock. Time for the good-byes and the farewell toast with the commander.

And suddenly his throat went dry. Could this be fear? No, for what could be less fearsome than to be struck down in battle, in the righteous fight for a righteous cause? It was the only death for the true Samurai.

With his hand on the doorknob he turned and slowly looked around his familiar room for the last time. Then he walked out, carefully closing the door behind him.

2

The Kamikaze state of mind, here reconstructed from interviews and letters, is something completely foreign to the Occidental. Yet the deliberate premeditated destruction of self on a military mission is something that came as naturally to the Japanese as drinking a cup of sake. The complete and absolute loyalty to the Emperor and to the homeland, a loyalty anciently rooted in the Japanese past where myth merges with fact, was expressed on the field of battle by an amazing disdain for death.

In 1931, when the Japanese were attacking Shanghai, three soldiers carried a bangalore torpedo into a barbed-wire entanglement and blew themselves up in thus effecting a breach. The Japanese Army made much of the event and a statue realistically depicting the sacrifice was erected in Tokyo, to which school children were brought to bow, to contemplate, and to ponder.

During this war the special midget submarines—first used at Pearl Harbor and later in attacks on Sydney Harbor, Australia, and Diégo-Suarez, Madagascar—offered little more than death to their crews. (The “little” is represented by the one thoughtful lieutenant who beached his craft in Oahu and surrendered.)

In the island fighting across the Central Pacific and in the jungle struggles of the Solomons and New Guinea Japanese ground troops had made many fierce banzai charges, usually when the situation seemed hopeless but often before it had become so.

During the period between Pearl Harbor and the invasion of Leyte there were several instances of Japanese planes crashing Allied ships.

In December, 1941, off Malaya, a Japanese Navy plane plummeted into the British battleship *PRINCE OF WALES*, but this was considered accidental. During the Battle of Santa Cruz Island a flaming Japanese torpedo plane crashed the wounded carrier *HORNET*, later sunk by bomb and torpedo. As the Americans piled ashore at Biak Island off the New Guinea coast in May, 1944, a Japanese Army plane, already afire, smashed into a little control boat, the SC 699. And there were other incidents: an Army plane crashed a British ship near the Andaman Islands; another Army pilot over the Java Sea dived on an Allied torpedo which was heading for the convoy he was protecting.

But these crashes were all isolated and unconnected. If, indeed, they were premeditated they certainly were not encouraged by either the Army or the Navy higher commands.

Then came American invasion of the Marianas, the Battle of the Philippine Sea, and the Imperial Navy's irreplaceable loss of 1,500 trained flying personnel. It was a blow from which the enemy never recovered.

3

Immediately after this disastrous battle, Rear Admiral Obayashi, Commander of the 3rd Japanese Air Squadron, requested his boss, Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, in command of the Japanese Fleet at the famous battle, to allow him to organize and personally lead a Kamikaze unit.

The matter was taken up to the highest naval command in Tokyo—Admiral Soemu Toyoda, Commander in Chief Combined Fleet—but there were no concrete results. It was felt, or so the Japanese would have

us believe, that the initiative should come from below, that each man should be a volunteer.

After the Marianas, the Japanese in the Philippines began to get jittery. The Americans were converging on that stolen archipelago from two directions. The problem was how to sink Allied transports once they turned up off the Philippine shores and before they could land their troops. Tests were performed in Manila Bay during September, 1944, to determine the probable number of hits that could be made by orthodox horizontal bombing methods on ships dead in the water, as the unloading transports would be. Results: one chance in four. Not enough. As against this it was thought that suicide crash-diving methods, the perfect merging of pilot, plane, and bomb in a brain-directed missile would result in 100 per cent bulls'-eyes.

Then came the sequence of events that culminated in the Battle for Leyte Gulf. It was on the 15th of October, 1944, as Halsey was moving his Third Fleet from the Formosa area toward Leyte that Rear Admiral Arima, commander of a Japanese Navy air flotilla in the Philippines, crashed his plane reputedly into an American carrier but actually into the sea. This, according to the Japanese Navy, lighted "the fuse of the ardent wishes" of their pilots—and Kamikaze was born.

After the war Admiral Toyoda, in an interview, remarked: "One unexpected result of the decision to send the Second Fleet into Leyte Gulf was the appearance of the so-called Special Attack Air Corps. That is not to say that the Special Attack Corps were organized then on the spur of the moment. The matter had been talked over among members of air units, not only among staff officers but even among pilots themselves. It had been under consideration because of the feeling that the method of special attack was the only one likely to prove successful in view of the insufficient training which most of these pilots had received. When the news came to the land air forces that the Second Fleet was being sent into Leyte Gulf, Admirals Onishi and Fukudome, in command respectively of the First and Second Air Fleets, decided that if the surface units are taking such desperate measures we too must take similarly desperate measures, and started the first operation of the so-called Special Attack Force . . ."

In the midst of the Battle for Leyte Gulf, on October 25, 1944, the first planned Kamikaze attack—Navy fighters—came crashing into the escort carrier units hard by the gulf; four ships were damaged and one,

the ST. LO, was sunk. All this was done with ten planes. Not bad results by anybody's standard.

4

Although the Japanese Navy had initiated the suicide attacks, the idea had been developing in both services simultaneously and within a few days of the first attack, the Japanese Army Air Force also was committed to suicide tactics.

Literally the word "Kamikaze" means "divine wind." It is a historical reference to the great storm that destroyed the Mongol fleet that was attempting to invade Japan in the Middle Ages. Or, as the Japanese explain it, "the name Kamikaze is born of a fervent prayer that the divine tempest, which saved the country in a crisis by overwhelming at one stroke the great army of Mongolia at the time of the Mongolian invasion, might reappear this time in the guise of a human bullet, backed by the loyal spirit of our young fliers." Strictly speaking, however, the word refers only to the naval planes and pilots. Both services used the phrase "special attack units"—Tokubetsu Kogeki Tai, later compressed to Tokko Tai—and this continued to be the Army's official designation. However, such fine distinctions were not for the men on the receiving end of the fierce attacks. Any plane hell-bent on smashing into a ship was a Kamikaze and that was that. So as Kamikazes history will record them all.

Admiral Onishi's First Air Fleet was the first unit to fly planned Kamikaze missions. The Admiral did not survive the war but his Chief of Staff, Captain Rikihei Inoguchi, did and after the war explained to interrogators something of the Kamikaze spirit: "The center of Kamikaze is morale. Just prior to the Allied landing in the Philippines we felt as follows: we must give our lives to the Emperor and the Nation, that is our inborn feeling. I am afraid you cannot understand it well or you may call it desperate or foolish. We Japanese base our lives on obedience to Emperor and nation. On the other hand we wish for the best place in death, according to Bushido. Kamikaze originates from these feelings . . ."

And Lieutenant General Kawabe, Commanding General of the Army's Air General Headquarters: "Everyone who participated in these attacks died happily in the conviction that he would win the final victory by his own death. The Japanese, to the very end, believed that by spiritual means they could fight on equal terms with you, yet by any other com-

parison it would not appear equal. We believed our spiritual conviction in victory would balance any scientific advantage and we had no intention of giving up the fight . . .

"You call our Kamikaze attacks 'suicide attacks.' This is a misnomer and we felt very badly about your calling them that. They were in no sense 'suicide.' The pilot did not start out on his mission with the intention of committing suicide. He looked upon himself as a human bomb which would destroy a certain part of the enemy fleet for his country. He considered it a glorious thing, while 'suicide' may not be so glorious."

Most certainly the Kamikaze spirit was in the Japanese waiting to be torched off. But at the same time it is also evident that such tactics, so generally applied, had to be sanctioned by the field commanders with approval from Imperial General Headquarters. It could not all come from "the bottom up," as the Japanese would have us believe. Also the propaganda that followed in the prop wash of the Kamikaze attacks from the very beginning makes it evident that full plans had previously been made to derive maximum effect from this shift of tactics.

In early November, 1944, an article was published by the Japanese Cabinet Information Board which read in part: "The Japanese-American war is, in the final analysis, a decisive war in which the 130 million people of America and the 100 million people of Japan have been mobilized to determine who shall devour and who shall be devoured. Consequently if the one hundred million people of Japan, each at his respective post submits to the enemy American people, the brave warriors in the front lines cannot win this war no matter how they struggle to do so. That is to say when our one hundred million people each at his own post, have been able to overwhelm the enemy Americans at the same posts, we can anticipate for the first time the victory of Japan. Oh, stand firm! If you do not stand firm, how can you justify yourselves before the departed spirits of the Kamikaze Special Attack Force.

"And so you who strive day and night on the ramparts of production behind the guns must remember that even one plane more is a sacred plane which rushes to destroy the enemy, when that one plane has aboard the sacred spirit of a member of the Kamikaze Force. The young Eagles of the Kamikaze Special Attack Force who dare to dash headlong and happily to the destruction of the enemy are waiting anxiously for that plane to fly to the front lines saying to themselves: 'I, too, shall go.' So it is, the brave ruddy-faced warriors, tanned in the southern countries, with

handkerchiefs tied about their heads, at peace in their favorite planes, smiling happily as if gathered to the fond bosoms of their mothers, dash out spiritedly to the attack along a path of assault from which there is no return. Do they not appear vividly before us? Increase production! Stand firm! Drive on!"

But in spite of all these high words and rich praises the fact still remained that with the initiation of Kamikaze tactics the Japanese abandoned the air war; they admitted their ineffectiveness against American planes, pilots, and techniques. Suffering huge losses in planes and pilots during the fierce American carrier sweeps and lacking trained personnel for replacements, the Japanese Air Force was virtually forced into Kamikaze tactics. "Macabre, effective, supremely practical under the circumstances, supported and stimulated by a powerful propaganda campaign, the special attack became virtually the sole method used in opposing the United States striking and amphibious forces, and these ships the sole objectives."¹

¹ USSBS (Naval Analysis Division), "The Campaigns of the Pacific War," p 286.

CHAPTER THREE

The Drawbridge Attacked

I

IN THE closing days of October, 1944, the military eyes of the Pacific world were focused on a group of islands 7,000 miles west of San Francisco and only one-tenth that distance from the mainland of China—the Philippines.

Ever since Dewey steamed into Manila Bay in 1898 and sank a few surprised Spanish ships, the United States had been entwined in the government and in the economic development of this Asiatic fringe-land. The Filipinos had at first been hostile to the “liberators” from the giant Republic across the seas, as they had been hostile to Spain—and for much the same reason. The United States Army proclaimed its presence as being in aid to winning freedom for the revolutionaries under Emilio Aguinaldo, who had Manila besieged before the Americans got there. But from ally Aguinaldo quickly passed to the status of rebel when the doctrine of Manifest Destiny—and the realization of the islands’ wealth in gold and industrial raw materials—convinced the United States government it should replace, not simply displace, Spanish sovereignty. There ensued a bitter five years’ war, and at its end the Filipinos accepted our paternal colonialism which promised them many economic and educational advantages with eventual self-government. When the Japanese swept down across the islands in 1941, the Filipinos whose fathers had taken to the hills against the Americans, took to the hills against the new invaders and there fought side by side with the Americans who had escaped the Japanese net that drew so many into the starving horror of the prison camps.

The Philippines, considerably larger than the British Isles, consist of over 7,000 islands, many of them very small and nameless. To the north is Luzon, the largest island (about the size of Indiana), and to the south is Mindanao, the second largest (about the size of Tennessee). Between are smaller but important islands—Samar, Panay, Mindoro, Leyte, Negros, Cebu, Masbate.

The islands were discovered by Magellan in 1520 and claimed for Spain; it was on a small island near Cebu that the famous explorer met his death at the hands of the natives.

From shores of mangrove swamp and salt beach, the islands rear into mountains among which are a number of active volcanoes. The climate—for the tropics—is not unduly hot. Vegetation, like that of the Indies to the south, is rich and varied. Inland the mountains are covered with cool rain forests. Parts of the lowlands are covered with dense jungles, parts with open plains of coarse grass. Two-thirds of the land is forested and tropical fruits are abundant. Commercially the Filipinos grow rice, tobacco, sugar cane, coconuts, and the famous Manila hemp, a product much used by the Navy. The ancient rice terraces, cut out of the hillsides of the mountain provinces of northern Luzon, are one of the most remarkable agricultural sights of the world. The population of the islands is approximately 16,000,000.

The earliest inhabitants were a pygmy race of non-Negro but black-skinned, woolly-haired people whose remnant still lives primitively in the deeper jungles and forests where they were driven in prehistoric times by the Malayan ancestors of the Igorots, the dog-eating tribes of northern Luzon who were themselves beaten back by a new wave of invaders, also Malays. The newcomers settled in the lowlands and, spreading to the central islands, were subsequently Christianized by the Spanish who came in Magellan's wake. They became known as "Filipinos," and their islands as Las Filipinas, after King Philip of Spain. It is these people that we usually think of when we speak of the Filipino people and from their ranks come most of the nation's leaders and professional men.

The Moros of Mindanao and the Southern Philippines are descended from a third wave of Malays, but Malays who had previously been converted to Mohammedanism by the far-roving Arabs. They arrived only a century before the Spanish, and identified themselves less with the Philippine Islands to the north than with Borneo and the Celebes.

2

This, then, was the Philippines, and these the Filipinos. The Americans, in October, 1944, were fighting to free them. Even if that was a secondary consideration to conquering the Japanese, this time they meant it. Philippine independence was scheduled by law, and autonomy had been granted in 1935.

On the other side of the world, in Europe, the Allied Armies had sent the Wehrmacht reeling back across France and the Low Countries. The day after the American landings on Leyte in the Philippines the American First Army captured the German city of Aachen, first sizable German city to be seized. General Eisenhower, with more than three million troops on the Continent, was preparing a mighty assault on the Siegfried Line which would carry him to the Rhine.

The fighting on Leyte was different. Men were measured in terms of divisions, not armies. Instead of flat plains ideal for a war of maneuver, there was jungle and mud. Instead of the mass attack of hundreds of tanks and the thunder of thousands of planes, there was the plodding foot soldier and the whine of the sniper's bullet. Instead of taking divisions of prisoners, there were paltry dozens. The Japanese, unlike their Axis brothers of Europe, fought till death.

What was this island of Leyte that was to become a decisive battleground, and a name in history together with Saratoga, Gettysburg, and Château-Thierry?

One of the islands of the Central Philippines—those islands which collectively are known as the Visayas—Leyte is the natural gateway to the archipelago. Surigao Strait, which separates Leyte from Mindanao to the south, is one of the two principal entrances into the archipelago from the Pacific. It was here that one arm of the Japanese sea-pincers on Leyte Gulf was lopped off by the combatant ships of the Seventh Fleet during the famous Battle for Leyte Gulf.¹ To the northeast Leyte is separated from the larger but more undeveloped island of Samar by the narrow and shallow San Juanico Strait. At Leyte's back, to the westward, lie the many scattered islands of the Visayas.

Leyte itself is hog-backed from north to south by the mountain range of the Central Cordillera, which consists almost entirely of extinct volcanoes characterized by interlacing, knifelike spurs and ridges heavily overgrown by tropical foliage and cut by deep ravines. It forms an effective barrier between the eastern and western coastal areas of the island. Thus, while the Americans were pouring in troops over the eastern beaches, the Japanese were doing the same thing from the west, as will soon be seen.

North and east of this central mountain range broad Leyte Valley stretches diagonally across the island from the western beaches to

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV.

Carigara Bay on the north. The capital, and main port of the island, is Tacloban, a city of 31,000. Here most of the produce of Leyte Valley and southern Samar is sold and exported. Leyte's roads are poor at best, but the principal ones are here in the north connecting Leyte Valley, 250 square miles of farmlands, with Tacloban.

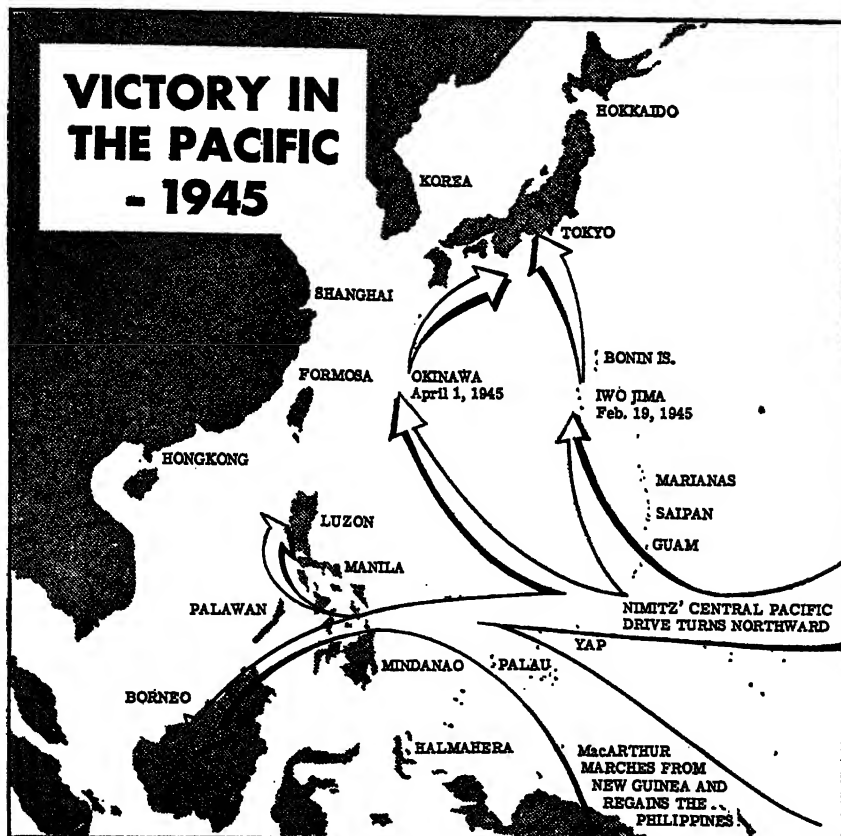


FIGURE I

On the other side of the island, separated from Leyte Valley by the mountains, is another and smaller plain, Ormoc Valley, which sweeps northward from the west-coast town of Ormoc to the mountains that fringe the northern coast. It was through this valley that the Japanese were to feed troops into the island.

The southern half of Leyte is wild mountainous country and was al-

ready mostly in the hands of guerrillas long before the Americans landed. Control of Leyte is control of the valleys and the adjacent hills and mountains. Thus the great struggle for the island was in the north.

As related in the previous volume of this series, four divisions¹ of General Krueger's Sixth Army were put ashore by Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet over the sandy beaches on the northeastern quarter of the island.

These troops went ashore with the acrid smoke of the naval bombardment still burning their nostrils. Overhead flew the planes of nearby Seventh Fleet escort carriers ready to give direct support to the men ashore or to pounce upon any plane bearing the emblem of the red meatball. Another fleet, too, elements of Admiral Halsey's Third, marched up and down off the western shores of the Philippines, sending its aircraft in smashing strikes against the enemy airfields of Luzon and keeping a weather eye open for the Japanese Fleet.

Things on Leyte did not go according to plan.

Originally Army Engineers had estimated that five days after the landings they would have facilities for two P-38 fighter groups (150 planes) and one night-fighter squadron (12 planes). It was one of the most optimistic estimates in military history and the discrepancy between it and what was actually furnished, radically affected the operation plans not only of MacArthur in the Philippines but also of Nimitz in the Central Pacific. Some inquiry into the background of the situation might be enlightening.

Both MacArthur's Headquarters and the Far East Air Force (as the combination of the Fifth and Thirteenth Army Air Forces was called) thought that excellent airfields would be found or could be quickly developed on Leyte. On the sand spit called Cataisan Point, across a small inlet from Tacloban, there was a strip that had been used for prewar civilian traffic. The Japanese, in addition, had cleared some runways near the town of Dulag and it was thought that these could be made quickly serviceable.

Once ashore it was found that these strips would take a lot of fixing. In fact none of them, with the possible exception of Tacloban, was ever to

¹ From north to south they were the 1st Cavalry Division (dismounted) (Maj. Gen. Verne D. Mudge); the 24th Infantry Division (Maj. Gen. Frederick A. Irving); the 96th Division (Maj. Gen. James L. Bradley); and the 7th Division (Maj. Gen. A. V. Arnold). The first two divisions comprised the X Corps (Maj. Gen. Franklin C. Sibert) and the last two the XXIV Corps (Maj. Gen. John R. Hodge).

be of any real value. The monsoon rains converted the unpaved Dulag strips to liquid mud from which rice might spring but never an airplane. At Tacloban further destruction was wrought to the rain-soaked flying field by the wheels and tractors of hundreds of vehicles lugging in supplies from the bellies of the gap-jawed LSTs. Finally the Army was forced to divert most of its construction troops to work on the flimsy roads that fast collapsed under the heavy military traffic, unless the whole operation was to become as bogged down as the land-based aircraft.

"Mud is still mud," wrote Major General Ennis C. Whitehead, commenting on the lagging engineering effort, "no matter how much you push it around with a bulldozer."

During the Battle for Leyte Gulf, when the thin-skinned escort carriers were under attack from both Japanese surface units and Kamikaze planes, sixty-seven stranded carrier planes made impromptu landings on the Tacloban strip. Twenty of them cracked up. Not until two days after the battle, and after 3,500 feet of steel matting had been laid, did 34 P-38s fly in from Morotai: hardly enough planes to give the exposed Army transports lying off the beaches or the troops battling inland any snug sense of security.

3

On the night of October 25, 1944, after the decisive Battle for Leyte Gulf, Admiral Halsey had flashed a triumphant message to Admiral Nimitz at Guam and to Admiral King in Washington: "In the course of protecting our Leyte landings the back of the Japanese fleet has been broken."

And so it had. But the American forces were not unbloodied. The light carrier PRINCETON had been sunk following an attack by a lone Japanese plane. The cruiser BIRMINGHAM, while attempting to give assistance to the stricken carrier, had been severely damaged by an explosion aboard PRINCETON and was forced to withdraw to Ulithi.

But it was the "jeep" carrier force off Leyte Gulf that was the hardest hit. Since the invasion, planes from these little carriers had been drafted to furnish close support to the troops ashore; shooting, bombing, rocketing enemy trenches, gun positions, troop concentrations, truck convoys, stores, ammunition, fuel dumps. Besides, they had struck hard at the neighboring islands of Cebu, Negros, Panay, and Mindanao to neutralize Japanese

airfields. Then had come the heroic encounter with the largest units of the Japanese Fleet. In stopping the rushing charge for Leyte Gulf the escort carrier *GAMBIER BAY* had been sunk by shellfire, as had the destroyers *HOEL* and *JOHNSTON* and the destroyer escort *SAMUEL B. ROBERTS*. The *FANSHAW BAY* and *KALININ BAY*, baby carriers of the same group, had been damaged by shells from Jap cruisers. Their sister carrier *ST. LO* had survived the surface engagement only to be sunk by a single Kamikaze. The *SUWANEE*, *SANTEE*, *SANGAMON*, *KITKUN BAY*, and *WHITE PLAINS* had all been more or less damaged by suicide attacks.

The escort carriers—eighteen in all—of Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet had fought hard against the heaviest ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Now they were exhausted; the badly bruised remnants of the northern group, which had borne the brunt of the charge, departed from Woendi the night after the battle. That left twelve carriers, three already damaged, in the other two groups. But they, too, were exhausted.

Ammunition lockers were empty, drained of bombs and torpedoes. The ships needed fuel, the planes needed gasoline, the pilots needed rest. In all, the escort carriers had lost 128 planes during the great battle. Personnel losses totaled over 1,500 killed and missing, over 1,200 wounded. Small wonder on the 26th of October that their boss, Admiral Kinkaid, recommended that the remaining escort carriers be withdrawn to Manus that very day.

By this time the Fast Carrier Task Force, alias Task Force 38, alias the Third Fleet, had been operating at sea almost continuously for two months. During that time it had repeatedly attacked airfields and shipping in the Philippines, smothered Formosa and Okinawa with bomb and bullet, and rounded things off by trouncing part of the Japanese Fleet.

On the evening of the 26th, Halsey sent a message to MacArthur saying that after seventeen days of steady fighting the fast carrier force was virtually out of bombs, torpedoes and provisions, and its pilots were exhausted. "I am unable to provide any intended direct air support," the message concluded. "When will your shore-based air take over air defense at the objective?"

So the next day, after the 34 P-38s arrived, General MacArthur announced that land-based air would take over the responsibility for direct support to the troops in the Leyte-Samar area.

Further he announced that "the attack of all land targets in the Philippine archipelago is allocated to the allied air forces, Southwest

Pacific Area." It was a big order. In fact it was too big for the pitifully few fighters, flying from a boggy, unfinished airstrip, to fill.

4

By the end of October approximately 164,000 troops had been put ashore on Leyte. The coastal strip from Dulag north had been quickly captured against the light resistance of the Japanese 16th Division, which had fought against the Americans before—on Bataan. On the northern flank the X Corps—the 1st Cavalry and the 24th Infantry—had pushed up Leyte Valley to the north coast and had gained control of the shoreline there between the towns of Barugo and Carigara. Early in the operation Tacloban,¹ airstrip and all, had been captured and river-wide San Juanico Strait secured.

To the south the XXIV Corps—96th Infantry and 7th Infantry—had broken Jap resistance around the crude airstrips near Dulag, San Pablo, and Buri. In addition patrols had been pushed across the waist of the island to Baybay on the west coast without contacting the enemy.

Japanese intelligence on Leyte, it was discovered after the war, was very poor and this push across the middle of the island was an instance of it. The Japanese had thought the trails too narrow and primitive to be used by troops. They also thought the strait between Leyte and Samar was impassable to landing craft because of shallows and consequently they were much surprised by American landings on the north coast. Communications between the Japanese headquarters and the front lines was no better than their intelligence. Information concerning the American units fighting on Leyte was always received from San Francisco news broadcasts before it was reported back from the Japanese in actual battle.

The Japanese were quick to throw reinforcements into the battle for Leyte. This they were able to do, through Ormoc, the back door of Leyte, because of the lack of American air strength. The Fifth Air Force was mired down on squall-lashed Tacloban. Of the original 34 P-38 fighters

¹ After the war Major General Toshi Nishimura, Chief of Staff to Gen. Yamashita, said: "The 16th Division had its headquarters and most of its supplies at Tacloban. . . . We did not think that the U.S. Forces would land very close to Tacloban and felt it was a rather secure base. We were fairly well prepared for aerial bombardments, but had no idea of the power of the American Navy's barrage. The ferocity of the shelling caused our troops to panic and withdraw from the line along the coast. . . . We were able to get none of the stores from Tacloban and the troops threw away much of their equipment in their withdrawal . . ."

only 20 were operational after five days. The escort carriers had finally been withdrawn on October 29 after having chalked up the respectable score of over 300 enemy planes destroyed in nine days' battle. Army bombers from Morotai flew the 600-odd ocean miles to the Visayas, but were unable to stop the steady influx of the coast-hugging determined Japanese.

The idea of sending a counterlanding force to reinforce any area where the Americans might invade was an integral part of the Japanese Sho Operation, the defense of the Philippines. On October 26, while the naval Battle for Leyte Gulf was in its mopping-up stage, carrier aircraft spotted a Japanese cruiser, destroyer, and three naval transports that had unloaded the day before at Ormoc. After the Navy's ensuing aerial attack, one transport was the only ship of the group left afloat¹—but the troops had been landed.

And still the reinforcements continued. Reconnaissance planes reported eighteen 100-foot barges in Ormoc Bay. An Army artillery liaison pilot spotted twelve barges at the pier and twenty barges and three ships in the bay. On the 28th there were twenty-five luggers in the bay (some left burning by their discoverers) and fifty barges on the beach.

What were these reinforcements? Where did they come from?

By ship from Mindanao came the Japanese 39th Division. By barge from Panay came the 169th and 171st Independent Infantry Battalions and two other battalions of the 102nd Division. The 20th Independent Antitank Battalion from Manila and the Headquarters of the XXXV Army Corps from Cebu had arrived.

The Japanese were taking full advantage of the American weakness in the air and were committing themselves to a decisive fight. The fate of the whole Philippines would be decided on this small island no bigger than the state of Delaware.

Just before sunset of the first day of November a convoy consisting of four large cargo transports, six destroyers, and four coast defense ships dropped anchor in Ormoc Bay. The convoy had come all the way from Japan, and aboard the transports was a precious cargo—the crack 1st Japanese Division known as the “Imperial Victory Division.” As it turned out, they hardly lived up to their name.

The 1st Division was one of the top four divisions of the Japanese Army. In 1937 it had played an important part in the North China

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV.

Campaign. As the Allies advanced steadily along the New Guinea coast and through the Central Pacific, the 1st Division moved from Manchuria to Shanghai, where it was held as mobile reserve to throw against Allied landings either in the Philippines or on the China Coast. Following the American landings on Leyte the division was quickly loaded and rushed to Ormoc.

The convoy had weaved down between Mindoro and Luzon, across the Sibuyan Sea, through the scattered islands of the Central Philippines, and finally had pulled up at the back door of Leyte. The last afternoon a B-24 had shadowed the convoy for a while and later eight P-38s—all that were available—attacked, but no real damage was done. Then the next morning, shortly after dawn, the P-38s commenced an all-day attack as the ships lay in Ormoc Bay. B-24s also tried high-level bombing again, and succeeded in sinking one of the cargo transports. But by this time all the troops and most of the equipment had been put ashore.

That same day Lieutenant General Sosaku Suzuki, commander of the Thirty-fifth Imperial Army, also landed.¹

Allied aircraft still did not control the air over Leyte, and until they did Japan could keep funneling her troops into Ormoc. The carrier planes had mostly been recalled, useless because of unexpected drain on craft, ammunition and men, and the Air Force's land-based airplanes were limited to the number the fields could accommodate. Small wonder that during this period the Japanese were able to increase their strength on Leyte by 22,400 men. Added to the 10,000 that remained of the original 16,000 on the island, and quite an obstacle on the road to Manila had been created. And there was more to come.

5

San Pedro Bay, the northern arm of Leyte Gulf and (despite its shallow depth) one of the best anchorages in the Far East, was busier than a dime store on the Saturday before Christmas. Ships, all manner of ships, came and went without apparent schedule except to the directors

¹ The Japanese held the Philippines with some 260,000 troops. The 14th Imperial Japanese Army held Luzon and adjacent islands while the 35th Imperial Army held the islands to the south. General Tomoyuki Yamashita—"The Tiger of Malaya," conqueror of Singapore and Manila—took command of the Japanese forces on October 7, 1944. From his headquarters at Fort McKinley in Manila Yamashita exercised control over all the Philippines, besides personally commanding the 14th Army. Lieutenant General Sosaku Suzuki, with headquarters on Cebu, commanded the 35th Army.

of the water ballet. Transports, LSTs, cargo ships, destroyer escorts, frigates, minesweepers, oilers, landing craft, hospital ships; the old battleships, the cruisers, and the destroyers steamed back and forth in the gulf to protect these vulnerable cargo and convoy ships from increasingly unlikely possibilities of a Japanese surface raid.

From Humboldt Bay in New Guinea, from Seeadler Harbor in the Admiralties, came the resupply echelons, some in large convoys of over half a hundred big cargo ships and LSTs. Sometimes they were attacked by a few planes flying from the enemy-held Halmahera airfields, and the attacks were almost welcomed as a break in the monotony of dragging, weary days at sea.

To the newly arrived, San Pedro Bay seemed literally out of the world—as most of the civilians turned sailor knew it. Lateen-rigged sailboats and dugouts clustered around the anchored ships. On the upper decks of warship and merchantman Filipinos in ragged shorts and broad-brimmed hats padded barefoot among the crews selling, bargaining, trading—monkeys, bananas, seashells, and handicraft for cash or what have you. Wares that the Filipinos offered were as varied as the articles the sailors produced in exchange: abacuses were traded for shirts, any kind of shirt; coolie hats for trousers; Japanese invasion currency for skivvies. Many of the ships' captains issued orders that no more clothing could be bartered. Prevention of burns from a possible suicide crash, to say nothing of the ordinary demands of decency, required it.

Many of the Filipinos were fluent in English. Primed by gifts, they told stories that grew as American credulity was plumbed of hair-raising guerrilla fights and other adventures under Japanese occupation.

Most appreciated of local entertainment was furnished by invariably pretty Filipino girls who came alongside the anchored ships in small boats, and, with white-toothed smiles, sang their native songs to the accompaniment of guitar and mandolin. And then, on an instant, all eyes were lifted skyward and audience and actors scattered as the bull horns blared general quarters, when Jap planes crashed the party from over the misty blue hills of Leyte and Samar—but usually crashed themselves under the ill-tempered ack-ack.

Man-made smoke thickened the nature-made haze over San Pedro Bay. The smoke poured out protectively over the immobile ships by fuming destroyers, burned the eyes and parched the lungs of brass and blue-jacket. Even below decks there was not much respite, for it was sucked

into below-deck compartments through the ventilating system. Personnel prone to asthma became violently ill and, in some cases, had to be evacuated. Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes of the Royal Navy, aboard Admiral Conolly's command ship APPALACHIAN observing the landing, became so ill from smoke that oxygen had to be administered and he had to be evacuated next day.

But smoke was swell to hide under! Suicide pilots, determined to make a sure hit on a maximum target, were more blinded than the American sailors standing bleary-eyed to their battle stations. Even if the smoke obscured the finer points of the Filipino beauties in their gauzy blouses of piña, any glimpse of a girl was a sight for sore eyes.

So it seemed on November 1 to the men of the covering force—the three battleships MISSISSIPPI, CALIFORNIA, PENNSYLVANIA; the heavy cruiser HMAS SHROPSHIRE; the three light cruisers PHOENIX, NASHVILLE, and BOISE and thirteen destroyers. Both CALIFORNIA and DENVER had been hurt only a few days before by suiciders.

"I don't know if there was anything divine about it or not, but the Nips certainly staged a field day on November 1," related Commander Arthur M. Purdy, skipper of the destroyer ABNER REED. "Nip planes seemed to be all over the sky, twin-engined Bettys and single-engined fighters. They came in twice, once in midmorning and once in the early afternoon. With no friendly plane any place near, our AA fire smudged practically the whole sky. But murderous as it seemed, our fire failed to stop those plummeting planes. In the morning attack, which lasted about an hour and a half, three of our destroyers were hit—the AMMEN, the GLAXTON, and the KILLEN. All were put out of action."

Unfortunately the twin-tailed Lightnings from Tacloban airstrip did not arrive until the last Japs had gone home, crashed, or been shot down. The disappointed Army Air Force fliers hung around spoiling for a fight until they had to return to their home strip for more fuel. Then Japs came in again! Their timing was perfect, which argues that their intelligence system was likewise.

"The very first plane in that afternoon attack dived on my ship," continued Purdy. "Our barrage of fire ripped off one of his wings but he still kept coming. He apparently dropped his bomb about 100 yards from the ship and it went down the after stack, exploding in our steaming boiler. The plane itself practically swept away the whole midship section and within a matter of seconds the entire after deck house was one tremendous

fire fanned by the wind. Seven or eight minutes later a tremendous explosion, undoubtedly a five-inch magazine going up, shook us. The ship immediately sagged by the stern and ten minutes later she sank."

Thus the Kamikaze. The ABNER REED was one of the first to succumb to this macabre weapon, but dozens of others were to follow before the Japanese cried "Uncle Sam."

In the dark and into the dawning hours of November 2 the Japanese planes returned to the attack, but to a less elusive target than ships. Over the unfinished strip at Tacloban two dozen planes swooped down, strafing and bombing with fragmentation and incendiary bombs. Two precious Lightnings were destroyed and ten damaged. Supremely confident, another group returned shortly after daybreak. The Army Air Force, however, was waiting to receive them and its revenge was ample. Fifteen Lightnings were in the air, seventeen of the attackers very shortly were on the ground or under the water.

Gratifying, yes, but the Japanese had achieved their purpose. The Japanese 1st Division had come ashore at Ormoc during the diversion, and the harassed aircraft of Tacloban had not been able to stop them.

6

Meanwhile the American troops had slogged their way around the crescent-shaped north coast of Leyte to Pinamopoan, on Carigara Bay. Here they pivoted south on Highway No. 2, which ran down the valley to Ormoc. This corridor, Ormoc Valley, was the crux of the whole Leyte operation. To their east was the central mountain range, to the west lesser hills. Ahead lay the flat terrain checkered with the cane fields and coconut plantations, and the Japanese base of Ormoc beyond.

The Japanese held the whole valley. And when the American troops thrust into it, they were knocked all the way back to the beaches of Pinamopoan and the Japanese joyously perched themselves on Break-neck Ridge, a natural citadel of rugged finger ridges commanding the northern end of Ormoc Valley. Grimly now, and less headlong, the American troops redeployed.

Highways and roads soon meant nothing anyhow. The going was easier cross-lots, for between the deluging rains and the vehicles' wheels and caterpillar treads the routes became quagmires. Even though most of

the open country was rice paddies, or swamps, the roads were no more solid or passable.

The Infantry might be known as "The Queen of Battles," but during this rain-drenched, mud-clung campaign the soldiers of the Sixth Army did not feel much akin to royalty. The tough job of getting down to earth with the enemy always goes to the foot soldier, doughboy or Marine.

Whether these soldiers knew it or not, or in their misery even cared, they were fighting the decisive battle of the Philippine campaign. Leyte had been referred to as "the drawbridge to the fortress of Luzon." But if a defender makes his great effort in the defense of the drawbridge, there often is not much strength left for the defense of the fortress itself. That was what was happening in the Philippines.

On November 9 a Japanese major of the 1st Division was killed. On his body was found a significant field order. It told of a Japanese counter-offensive planned to drive north from the mountains and split the Americans in the Capocoan-Carigara area on the north coast. A Japanese sea-supply route would then be opened up through Carigara Bay, and when sufficiently strengthened the Japanese would use this area as a spring-board for a steam-roller advance into Leyte Valley.

General Krueger, from his command headquarters at the southern end of the Tacloban airstrip, decided to counter the Japanese plan by one of the oldest and most effective of military tactics—keeping the initiative. At the northern end of Ormoc Valley, at tough Breakneck Ridge, he would keep pounding at the well-dug-in enemy, at the same time pushing small parties against the enemy all along the central mountain range front. Ormoc Valley was to be infiltrated by one small detachment after another. The 7th Division, which had sliced across the waist of Leyte to the west coast, was ordered to push north along the shore. The coup de grâce planned by General Krueger was an amphibious landing at Ormoc Bay itself. Thus the back door would be slammed on the Japanese, who would then be trapped in the kitchen.

But the back door was not slammed yet, and in the meantime the Sons of Nippon kept shoveling in their best troops.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Carriers Stand By

I

WHEN GENERAL MACARTHUR announced on October 27 that his shore-based air force would assume responsibility for direct support of land operations in the Leyte-Samar area, the battle-weary fliers of the Third Fleet heaved a collective sigh of satisfaction and began thinking of the comparative paradise of Ulithi. It had been a hard grind and they deserved a little beer and baseball.

But some sighed too soon.

Tacloban, lashed by squalls, was a mass of mud, and work on the airstrip was not going well. The handful of Army fighters could not put up an effective cover for the airstrips and the ships in the gulf, much less give direct support to the troops. The day before, Admiral Kinkaid had reported 200 Japanese planes over the objective area plus many more over his combatant ships. The main source of enemy air strength was Luzon, which was out of reach of all land-based air.

So on the same day that he ordered all his Third Fleet units to Ulithi, Halsey received an urgent request from Kinkaid to leave one and possibly two fast carrier groups off the Philippines to maintain combat air patrol over San Pedro Bay at Leyte, and to strike at the enemy airfields.

It was so obvious that carrier air was still needed that Halsey left two groups¹—seven carriers—standing by to give support—while the other two groups headed for Ulithi. All the liberty-bound ships were stripped of every article of ammunition not needed for self-defense, for the seven watchdogs' use.

The carriers fanned out their attacks over Leyte, the Visayas, and Luzon. The Japs must have been annoyed at this, for they slapped back rather fiercely. On the 29th a suicider clipped the *INTREPID* (Captain

¹Task Group 38.2 (Rear Adm. Gerald F. Bogan), Carriers *INTREPID*, *CABOT*, *INDEPENDENCE*; Task Group 38.4 (Rear Adm. Ralph E. Davison) Carriers *FRANKLIN*, *ENTERPRISE*, *SAN JACINTO*, *BELLEAU WOOD*.

Joseph F. Bolger) and left one of the 20mm "tubs" that ringed the flight deck a flaming pyre. The next day a half dozen more came gliding out of the sun to smash into the flight decks of FRANKLIN (Captain James M. Shoemaker) and BELLEAU WOOD (Captain John Perry) and to miss by a wing's breadth SAN JACINTO (Captain Michael K. Kernodle).

2

Halsey was looking forward to his long-cherished plan to take a wallop at Tokyo itself with his Third Fleet. He remembered with much pleasure the Doolittle raid and how he had brought the task force into a launching position under the shadow of the empire. Now, in 1944, he was strong in carriers and aircraft; he would not have to sneak in, jab quickly, and sneak out like a commando raider. Now he could stand his ground and strike hard with over a dozen carriers, over a thousand planes.

He had planned to strike Tokyo in November. His Nimitz-approved program was to test the air strength of the empire, and incidentally to ruffle up a few Japanese home industries.

But this grand plan had to be postponed. The situation at Leyte was too touchy.

Instead of rest and recreation, the personnel of the Third Fleet got orders to battle-load for a quick turnaround, back to the hated Leyte zone.

The carrier air crews were on the ragged edge, just about at the exhaustion point. The flight surgeon of the WASP reported that only 30 pilots of the 113 in Air Group 14 were fit for combat after twenty days of constant fighting. Nevertheless, pressure against the Japs in the Philippines had to be continued. If the machinery could take it, the men had to.

Halsey decided to strike at the main source of enemy air power in the Philippines—the Luzon fields. Accordingly, Task Group 38.1 under Rear Admiral Alfred E. Montgomery, who had relieved Admiral John S. ("Slew") McCain when he took over the fast carrier Task Force 38 from "Pete" Mitscher, and Task Group 38.3 commanded by the veteran Ted Sherman, sortied from Ulithi without rest and rendezvoused about halfway between Ulithi and Luzon with Bogan's Task Group 38.2, which had been carrying on with general support work off Leyte. The fourth task group, Davison's, was ordered into Ulithi for replenishment and repairs.

3

The rendezvous was not to be accomplished without impediment.

At 11:30 on the night of November 3 the antiaircraft cruiser *RENO* was about 700 miles northwest of Ulithi, with Sherman's task group, which was proceeding at a speed of 15 knots and zigzagging according to plan. The moon was extremely bright, and the sea smooth, with a low, short swell. In fifteen minutes the watch was to change. Below decks the men of the midwatch yawned, stretched sleepily, and thought of how nice it would be to crawl back into their sacks instead of being on their feet for the next four hours.

And then, without warning, an explosion knocked them back into their bunks.

The *RENO* (Captain Ralph C. Alexander) had been hit by a submarine torpedo—the first time since 1942 that a Japanese submarine had successfully attacked a ship operating with the Fast Carrier Force. Steering control was lost and the ship began to list to port. The after engine room, after fire room, parts of the crew's mess, and some of the crew's quarters began to flood. Fires from many short circuits broke out. With the heartlessness dictated by efficiency the rest of the task force increased speed to 25 knots and ran from the area, leaving the crippled cruiser three submarine-hunting destroyers for company.

By the next morning the port list increased and *RENO* was down nine feet by the stern. Strenuous efforts were made to pump out the flooded compartments, and the list was decreased to seven degrees. All hands felt enormously cheered as the decks neared the level, when with the utter perversity of a wounded horse the ship suddenly lurched to starboard and hung there with a 20-degree list.

The fleet tugs *ZUNI* (Lieutenant Ray E. Chance) and *ARAPAHO* (Lieutenant Aubrey H. Gunn) came to the aid of *RENO*, and with the three destroyers screening, led her on the long slow voyage back to port. High winds and heavy seas from a nearby typhoon did their devilish best to finish what the Japanese torpedo had started, but by skillful seamanship *RENO* reached Ulithi late on the afternoon of November 11.

4

The rest of the Fast Carrier Task Force, after the torpedoing of *RENO*, continued at high speed to Luzon. Before dawn the next morning, Novem-

ber 5, the three carrier groups were in launching position east of the island, 160 miles from Manila and 80 miles from the nearest point on the coast.

In the central plains area of the island is the Clark Field complex whose six airdromes and fourteen runways were always in constant use. It was the main hub of activity. Two hundred miles to the north along the northwest coast were good secondary bases which were primarily used for staging aircraft down from Formosa. Sixty miles south of Clark, at Manila, there were eight airdromes clustered around Nichols and Nielson fields. Scattered over the whole of Luzon there were many smaller fields.

The pie that was Luzon was divided three ways: the northern part, including Clark Field area, Aparri on the tip of the island, and the shipping in Lingayen Gulf and northward was given to Montgomery's carriers, WASP (flying McCain's three-star flag), HORNET, MONTEREY (Captain Stuart H. Ingersoll), and COWPENS (Captain Herbert W. Taylor, Jr.) ; Bogan's INTREPID (Captain Joseph F. Bolger), HANCOCK (Captain Fred C. Dickey), CABOT (Captain Stanley J. Michael), and INDEPENDENCE (Captain Edward C. Ewen) (equipped with night fighters) went after southern Luzon, the Verde Island Passage, and the northern Sibuyan Sea where Japanese Admiral Kurita had so recently caught hell ; Sherman's group, ESSEX (Captain Carlos W. Wieber), TICONDEROGA (Captain Dixie Kiefer), and LEXINGTON (Captain Ernest W. Litch) drew what was left in the middle, including shipping in and around Manila.

The dawn fighter sweep over the airfields caught the Japanese by surprise. Few planes rose to dispute control of the air except over the Clark-Mabalacat fields area where 58 were shot down by the Hellcats.

The Japanese had taken heavy losses from Halsey's previous typhoon-like sweeps through the Philippines, but they had managed to summon replacement aircraft from the empire through Formosa. They had also learned the value of camouflage when fighter and AA defenses are weak. Hundreds of aircraft were thoroughly dispersed in the woods, well revetted and degassed, fringing the Luzon fields, 300 at Clark-Mabalacat alone. Dummy aircraft of straw were placed in the area to divert American attacks. Grass-covered taxiways extended as much as two miles to dispersal areas.

The camera's eye was the only means of piercing the clever Japanese camouflage. As early as possible aerial photographs were taken of each

area, and damp prints studied at the briefing of the pilots of the next strikes.

Sherman's fliers found plush shipping in Manila Bay and quickly leapt after it. The heavy cruiser *NACHI*, attempting to escape the bay with two destroyers, got preferential attention. Reports were that she was hit with nine torpedoes, thirteen 1,000-lb. bombs, six 250-lb. bombs, and sixteen rockets before she broke in three pieces and sank. Either she was an extraordinarily tough ship, or observers did some wishful reporting.

The *NACHI* sank in only a few fathoms of water and after the occupation of Manila American divers took from her safes a file of top secret war documents, the famous "Nachi papers." Translated on the spot, much was learned from them about Japanese strategy and operational procedure.

During the early afternoon, while its fliers were pounding hard at Manila, Sherman's group had its first brush with the Japanese suicide squads. At 1300—an hour after noon—radar screens showed a few small unidentified planes closing rapidly from the west. Their identity was not long debatable. Roller-coastering from cloud to cloud, the four suiciders dove their single-engined, silver-colored planes one by one at the carrier fleet.

The first plane was hit by intense AA fire at about 3,000 feet while in a steep glide over *LEXINGTON*, and plunged harmlessly into the sea.

The *ESSEX* took care of its attacker in the same decisive fashion a minute later.

The third try got through. Men on the signal bridge of the *LEXINGTON* turned their heads skyward to follow the tiny speck of silver screaming down upon them. The sky was freckled with AA bursts. It seemed to the anxious men on the bridge that not even a sea gull could pass through such a lashing curtain of steel. But the plane came on. The 20mms that surrounded the flight deck added their hysterical clatter to the spaced coughs of the 40s and the sharp thunderclaps of the 5-inchers as the determined Jap came closer and closer.

There was nothing anybody could do about it except to shoot and shoot and shoot. Those not at the guns could only watch and to them it seemed that the Kamikaze was suspended in eternity. Then death on rigid wings hurtled into the starboard wing of the bridge. A blinding flash, a gout of black, flame-etched smoke . . .

Forty-two men lay dead; five had been disintegrated; and a hundred and thirty-one were wounded.

The *LEXINGTON* heeled slightly under the impact. The surgeons, the hospital corpsmen, the fire fighters, rushed to their duties. And the chaplain. But otherwise all hands remained at their battle stations and the ship carried on its main job.

Seconds later the fourth plane crash-dived *TICONDEROGA* from about 3,000 feet. It missed by the length of a good spit.

The danger of Japan's weapon of desperation was now obvious to the fleet commanders. No longer could 80 or 90 per cent destruction of attacking enemy aircraft by the Combat Air Patrol or by antiaircraft fire be considered an eminent success. Now, with the innovation of suicide attacks, the task force could not be counted safe unless the attackers were 100 per cent destroyed. New methods of protection had to be devised. The problem was attacked with an intensity born of dire necessity. The fate of the Fast Carrier Task Force was at stake.

On the following day, November 6, Luzon was again smothered by the planes of Task Force 38, and at the end of the day, when the force withdrew for fueling, the results of the two-day strike were indeed impressive. Nine ships had been sunk, including the *NACHI* and two vital oilers of Japan's fast-withering tanker fleet. Thirty other ships were damaged.

More importantly, for the men on Leyte, over four hundred Japanese planes were destroyed on the ground and in the air—a sizable chunk out of any air force.

The immediate result of the strike was a sharp decline in Jap air opposition at the Leyte beachhead. Again the Third Fleet's mobile airfields had accomplished its mission by carrying the air war to the enemy's fixed source of strength. The price paid was twenty-five planes lost in combat and eleven operationally, plus the damage to *LEXINGTON* and *RENO*.

5

In the dark night hours of November 9-10 the Third Fleet was steaming about 400 miles west of Saipan toward a rendezvous with Captain Jasper T. Acuff's ever-needed tankers. A typhoon, passing to the south of the formation had buffeted the refueling ships with 75-knot winds, and made it necessary to proceed farther to the eastward than planned.

Here some changes were made in the composition of the fleet. Bogan's carrier group, which had been operating continuously at sea since the

pre-Leyte sweep of Okinawa and Formosa on October 10, was sent to Ulithi for long-overdue rest and replenishment. Its place was taken by Davison's refreshed Task Group 38.4. The *WASP*, with Admiral McCain aboard, headed for Guam to pick up a new air group. The damaged *LEXINGTON* was routed to Ulithi for repairs.

A little after midnight of November 10 Sherman in *ESSEX*, who was in tactical command of the task force in the absence of Slew McCain, received dispatch orders from Halsey. "Cancel fueling, reverse course and proceed at best speed toward the Central Philippines to support our ground forces on Leyte Island."

A Japanese task group of heavy combatant ships had been reported heading through Balabac Straits, the route between the Philippines and Borneo taken by ill-starred Admiral Nishimura's ships when they attempted to crash Surigao Straits less than a month before.

This new threat was grim indeed. The task group included powerful ships that had escaped destruction at the Battle for Leyte Gulf—the giant 18-inch gunned *YAMATO* and three older battleships, *NAGATO*, *KONGO*, and *HARUNA*, plus a cruiser and four destroyers. These ships, once within gun range of our forces afloat or ashore, could raise plenty of hell.

And, closer to Leyte on another task, a reinforcing convoy was heading for Ormoc Bay, estimated to arrive the very next day. The word was flashed by the Army Air Force, busy with rubbing out a like convoy, not discovered in time to prevent its landing of the Japanese 26th Division.

Speed was essential. The fleet was 1,000 miles from Leyte. Reversing course, the Third Fleet headed toward the Central Philippines at 26 knots.

By 0600 on the morning of November 11, after a high-speed run of 30 hours, the carriers were in a launching position 200 miles off San Bernardino Straits. Fighter search groups fanned out from north to southwest in search of the warships. But the Japanese had fooled the Americans, or so they thought. The enemy fleet had disappeared overnight, believing its function accomplished to divert American air strength from the troop convoys. To have done this successfully the group, No. 1 Diversion Attack Force, would have had to proceed all the way to the Mindanao Sea, south of Bohol Island, but due to the shortage of fuel the Japanese ships turned back.

So the carrier planes swept north and west in search of the convoy. At 0827 it was spotted between Leyte and the northern tip of Cebu: four cargo ships, carrying troops and equipment, five destroyers, and one

destroyer escort, heading south at 8 knots. Seemingly safe the Japs, close to their destination, had no idea how hard they were going to be hit.

A strike of 347 planes from all groups was launched.

At eleven o'clock the convoy rounded Apali Point, where an escort vessel was still burning from the Army attack of the previous day, and headed east toward Ormoc Bay. And then the whirlwind of carrier planes struck.

Planes from ESSEX, TICONDEROGA, and LANGLEY, the first to arrive, struck at the transports. The escorts commenced to lay a smoke screen, but it was like trying to hide a wounded chicken from a determined hawk. Within minutes, all four transports were sunk from direct bomb and torpedo hits. Three of the ships just filled and settled, but the second in line, probably carrying ammunition, exploded violently.

While pulling out of their dives, the carrier planes were jumped by twenty-five Oscars, Zekes, and Tonys that had apparently been hiding in the scattered cumulus clouds. Eighteen of the Japs were shot down as they came. The rest scattered, high-tailing for cover.

As the planes from the other carriers came in, the target co-ordinator sent them after the destroyers, who were throwing up heavy, accurate anti-aircraft fire. Eight planes were knocked out of the sky before the not-so-myopic Jap gunners were smothered by the weight of American bomb and bullet.

Twisting destroyers are hard to hit, as every dive-bomber and torpedo plane pilot knows. But if the attackers have enough planes and enough perseverance they will finally succeed in their mission. That is what happened off Ormoc that day.

Twenty-two dozen aircraft finally sank four of the destroyers and the destroyer escort. The fifth, a larger ship of the TERUTSUKI class, escaped.

The "Manila to Leyte Express" had definitely been derailed.

6

If any planners in the Third Fleet still had hopes of striking the Japanese Home Islands soon they definitely gave up such dreams on November 13 when MacArthur said that the Army air strength in Leyte was not yet strong enough to neutralize the Japanese air bases in the Philippines and that until it was, he considered the support of the fast carriers essential. The big, slow Air Force bombers could shuttle back and

forth from Morotai, far south, but for fighters and dive bombers MacArthur had to have the carriers—mobile airstrips that never got muddy. He requested that the fleet continue to strike Luzon and Visayan air and any shipping that might threaten the Leyte Operation.

So once again the Third Fleet philosophically filled fuel tanks, arsenals and pantries, and pointed bows toward too familiar Luzon. This time the main targets were to be shipping in the Subic Bay-Lingayen Area and in Manila Bay.

The fighter sweeps over Clark Field at dawn on November 13 were so timed that the planes from Sherman's carrier group arrived over the target just as similar sweeps from Davison's group were departing. This method of keeping enemy planes out of the sky was the precursor of the "air blanket" type of defense that was to prove so effective in the months to come.

Air opposition was light. The Japanese had not had time to bring in replacements for losses inflicted by the carrier sweep of the week before. The main bout that day was fought in Manila Bay.

The bay, inside the breakwater, was crowded with ships. There was plenty of AA fire to protect them, accounting for most of the 25 American planes lost that day. It was a cloudy day, the ceiling low. Dense smoke from burning ships and the fires started by bombs on Manila docks and warehouses made it next to impossible for pilots to observe the results of their bombings. Ships faking damage by discharging fuel oil and smoke added to the attackers' complications.

Cavite Naval Yard across the bay, where once the United States Asiatic Fleet had based, also was heavily hit, and the famous Manila floating dry dock midway between Cavite and the city was torpedoed en route.

Next day the skies had cleared over Manila and it was possible to photograph the results of the strikes. The photographs told an impressive story: the shrinking Japanese fleet had further lost one light cruiser, the *Kiso*; four destroyers, three tankers, three or four cargo ships.

At that moment the Japanese counted the tanker the greatest loss. The United States Navy's air, surface, and submarine blockade had so attenuated Japan's fuel lines that not only its Navy but its industry slowed down. A 6-ship convoy of tankers from Singapore lost a ship a day to the submarines, the last one going down in Mindoro Strait even as Manila Bay was being churned to sooty, oily froth by the carrier planes.

When Task Force 38 withdrew once again to the east, the Japanese were in no condition to reinforce their Leyte garrison by convoys from Manila. Maneuvering room inside Manila breakwater, never very extensive, was virtually nonexistent because nearly a dozen sunken hulks cluttered the shallow basin. Dock areas and cargo-handling facilities also were all but inoperable.

Still the fleet's job was not finished.

7

Heavy rains continued to retard completion of the Army Air Force's essential airfields on Leyte, and on November 16 MacArthur told Admiral Nimitz that he would need the support of Halsey's fast carriers for the Mindoro Operation scheduled for early December.

So Halsey kept his pilots from growing stale by sending them on practice runs to Luzon. It was getting to be a habit. At Manila pilots had difficulty identifying undamaged ships among the many wrecks. The heavy cruiser KUMANO, which had been damaged but not sunk during the Battle for Leyte Gulf, was found dead in the water and uncamouflaged at Santa Cruz. Eight bombs were dropped at her, but no hits were made. Maybe the boys *were* growing stale.

The Japanese continued their method of passive defense by going to great effort to camouflage their aircraft on the ground. So cleverly did they do this that in one instance carrier pilots failed to locate aircraft at a field where photographs later showed about seventy planes!

So, less than a week later, on the 25th, Halsey was back again to finish the job—a job begun at the Battle for Leyte Gulf, a job not finished during the last attack on Luzon.

"The primary mission of the strike," dispatched Slew McCain, who had returned to the task force and now had his flag in HANCOCK, "is to locate and destroy, repeat, *destroy* the heavy cruiser at Santa Cruz . . ."

A rough time was in store for KUMANO, swinging at anchor on the west coast of Luzon, her bow blown off back as far as No. 1 turret. The KUMANO had been part of Admiral Kurita's 2nd Diversionary Attack Force in the Battle off Samar and had been badly damaged by torpedo and bomb. Now she lay helpless, awaiting the final coup de grâce from the winged executioners.

Death came in the form of thirty planes from TICONDEROGA. The planes planted five bombs along her deck and six torpedoes in her port side. Within four minutes of the time of the first hit, KUMANO turned turtle, broke in two, and sank.

8

Up to now the fast carrier task force had been lucky as far as Kamikazes were concerned. For a whole month the force had operated close to the Philippines, sometimes less than a hundred miles from Luzon, and still it was not subjected to sustained crash-dive attacks. Often "bandits" attempted to close the force for an attack, but they were usually shot down many miles away by the vigilant Combat Air Patrol. Sometimes a few trickled through, however, as happened when LEXINGTON was hit. But on the whole the fast carriers had been lucky, considering the number of times they had appeared off Luzon. Throughout November the force had appeared with regularity at intervals of six or seven days: November 5-6, 13-14, 19, and now 25.

Since before dawn it had been evident that the force was being scouted by enemy snoopers, and throughout the morning shadowing planes, sometimes as close as thirty miles, continued to appear on the radar screens.

At noon Task Group 38.2 (INTREPID, HANCOCK, CABOT, and INDEPENDENCE) was only 60 miles off the nearest point of the Luzon coast, Point Dijohan, which is on the same latitude as Lingayen Gulf but on the opposite, or west, coast. Task Group 38.3 (ESSEX, TICONDEROGA, and LANGLEY) was only 35 miles away. Both were steaming on course 220 at a speed of 20 knots.

Both groups were preparing to launch the third strike of the day against the airfields and shipping of Luzon when unidentifiable blips began to freckle the radar screens, as the second strike was returning to the carriers. Soon the screens were veritable Milky Ways of electronic reflections. It was impossible to tell friend from foe.

The Combat Air Patrol fought hard to keep a protective plane-tight ring about the ships; some of the Japs were splashed—but not all.

One, a Zeke, sneaked in low to dive on HANCOCK. Just as it launched its bomb, the ship's gunners caught the plane in a cone of fire at 2,000 feet. The HANCOCK was showered with spray from the bomb, which

struck alongside, and debris from the plane, one wing of which struck on the port side forward, causing a small fire.

Fifteen minutes later a dozen flying meatballs attacked Bogan's task group. The carriers' third strike had been launched, and, with empty decks, the ships executed an emergency turn to the left and opened fire.

The *INTREPID* directed its fire at two *Zekes* approaching low over the water from astern. One was hit and destroyed at 1,500 yards but the other bored in as bulletproof as a ghost. As sweating, cursing gunners poured hot lead into the plane, it pulled up a little to gain altitude, and then nosed over on a bee line for *INTREPID*'s flight deck.

The bullet-shredded plane crashed to port of the center line. The bomb, released a split second before the suicide crash, pierced the flight deck and made a junk pile out of the ready room. Fires flared in the hangar and on the flight deck, but even as repair parties and the asbestos-swathed fire fighters dashed to extinguish them their shipmates on the starboard guns were again firing at new attackers. A spinning *Kamikaze* crashed off the port bow of Halsey's *NEW JERSEY*.

"For God's sake, are we the only blank blank ship in the blank blank ocean?" complained the gunnery officer as other Jap planes came in at *INTREPID* on a collision course from the stern. But nobody answered him. One *Zeke*, coming in at a flat angle and firing his machine guns as he approached, smashed into the deck and skidded nearly to the bow. Its engine, parts of the plane, and fragments of the pilot's torso were scattered the length of the ship, and then—pow-boom!—its bomb exploded below decks. Now there were 69 dead of the ship's company.

"The Hard-Luck-I," grunted sweating gunners and parched fire fighters. The ship's luck had been consistently bad since she first bumped her nose while transiting the Panama Canal.

You cannot convince sailormen that there is no such thing as a lucky ship or an unlucky one. They'll cite you stories like this in refutation, even though *INTREPID*, with the longevity of a cat, always came back fighting. Her guns, now silenced, would fire again.

Her skipper, Captain Joseph F. Bolger, his sense of humor unshaken by the *Kamikaze* boys however his body was jarred, wrote: "Regardless of intermittent radar contacts with unidentified aircraft early in the day, the strike schedule was maintained until shortly after noon when . . . it was violently interrupted by the unwelcome landing aboard of two *Zekes* with their cargo of one bomb apiece."

At the time she was holed twice, INTREPID had 75 planes in the air. Some of these landed on other carriers of the force while the remaining planes went to muddy Tacloban Field on Leyte, and participated in a strike from there next day.

While INTREPID was undergoing her ordeal, the CABOT (Captain Stanley J. Michael) also had her hands full. Two Zekes dived on her, one being thwarted from suicide by being shot down 3,000 yards astern, but the other, although hit, struck the flight deck on the port side just forward of the catapult, causing damage that was mended within the hour. A few minutes later a third Zeke dived toward the "island" from ahead. She was knocked off her course by gunfire from CABOT and fell into the water close aboard on the port quarter, exploding under a gun mount.

And, speaking about luck: the Zeke that crashed the CABOT sheared off the propeller of a torpedo plane ready to take off, without otherwise damaging the plane or injuring the crew inside.

The veteran ESSEX was the third carrier hit by a suicide dive. Two planes dived on her; both hit by 40mm and 20mm fire. One crashed in the water. The other came through in a flat glide, passed over the planes spotted aft on the flight deck, and crashed on the port side forward. The plane was not carrying a bomb, and damage was small. With that, Halsey decided to get out of there—quickly.

9

Some thought after the Battle for Leyte Gulf that the Navy's war was all over but the shouting. Now it was plain to the most optimistic that in the suicide pilot Japan had a weapon so deadly, so incalculable in effect not only on ships but on the morale of all hands aboard and aloft, that it had all the aspects of a revolutionary phase of warfare, a new and somewhat horrifying invention. Squeezed into a corner of their once-vast empire, the Japanese could strike out with all the fanaticism of a patriotism that was at the same time a religious frenzy, to make the Americans pay extravagantly for each advance, inexorable though it was.

There was method in this madness, however. The Japanese calculated Kamikaze warfare with all the intelligence and stratagem of more orthodox warfare.

In describing the tactics of the hard-riding Third Fleet, Admiral Robert B. Carney, Halsey's energetic Chief of Staff, had this to say of

the November strikes: "The one occasion we got our tail feathers burned was on the 25th, and, frankly, we had to get out in a hurry. Afterwards we sat down around the table and tried to figure out what we had done that was wrong.

"The Nips had been ready for us; they knew we were coming. We examined our radio traffic; we considered the possibilities of leaks within the Philippine area. We weren't sure what had caused this alerting of the Japanese whereas before we had always been able to surprise them.

"By a frank analysis of our performance we discovered that we had permitted ourselves to fall into a crystallized pattern which undoubtedly was recognized by an alert Japanese Intelligence.

"We even tested this theory by duplicating that pattern at one time with no intention of striking, and were gratified to note that the Japanese retired all shipping from the Philippines and made every effort to meet the incoming strike, thereby demonstrating that the Jap recognized the pattern and thought we were coming in.

"I needn't say that we never again permitted ourselves to do anything twice the same way."

IO

Neither need it be said that November had been a busy month for the Fast Carrier Forces. They had sunk over 134,000 tons of Japanese shipping, and had destroyed over 700 aircraft, with a loss to themselves of 117 planes and no ships. The Japanese high command struggled to keep up strength by using its remaining aircraft carriers as transports, and by funneling a steady stream of troops and planes south through the Nansei Shoto-Formosa chain into western Luzon. But it was a losing battle for Admiral Fukudome's two Air Fleets and General Tominaga's Army Air Forces and by the end of the month these responsible commanders conceded the loss of the air in the Philippines to the United States Navy's carriers.

Manila, as a port, had lost its importance. A few ships still threaded their way into the hulk-cluttered bay, but it could no longer be used as a staging point for troop and supply reinforcements to Leyte.

The Fast Carrier Force had done the work of giants, but now it needed a little rest. By the end of November it had been at sea almost continuously for 84 days, nearly three months. The results of its work was evident. We were in the Philippines to stay.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Unsung Wars

I

THE PHILIPPINES held the Pacific spotlight, but nevertheless the war was still being fought in the nooks and crannies, the coves and atolls, of the great ocean, in places that had long since dropped from the front pages.

In the North Pacific, Army and Navy aircraft, flying through some of the worst weather in the world, bombed Japan's northernmost islands, the Kuriles. Occasionally a surface force of cruisers and destroyers would nose in to the fogbound shore for a bombardment.

In the press-forgotten Bismarck Archipelago and Northern Solomons our PT boats still jabbed at Japanese barges while our fliers continued to heap ton upon ton of explosives on the severed bits of empire. Men still fought as bitterly, and died as painfully, as ever although without the headlines' requiem.

From Darwin on Australia's arid northern shore, from Morotai, off the western tip of New Guinea, Allied planes—Australian, American, British, and Dutch—fanned out over the island world of the East Indies and the Southern Philippines, bombing, strafing, searching. Submarines of the Netherlands and of the Seventh Fleet prowled in the Java Sea, through Karimata and Makassar Straits, which flank the great island of Borneo, into the Sulu Sea and Mindanao Sea, and in the South China Sea. Submarines from the Central Pacific concentrated more on the Japanese Home Islands and their approaches.

And the Japanese in those cutoff areas still fought with as much heart and courage as if victory was inevitable. Enemy soldiers still raided our outposts in the Palaus. During November Japanese bombers swept over our airfields in the Marianas five separate times, to do considerable damage to parked aircraft. Nightly the enemy was over Morotai.

John J. Dreyfors, QM1/c, of the attack transport *FREDERICK FUNSTON's* beach battalion, tells of Morotai: "After the initial Leyte landings

we went back to New Guinea to bring up reinforcements. At Aitape, we picked up some of the 1st Cavalry Division. They had been out there so long they were an atabrine yellow. But they were a good looking outfit, all big six-footers.

"We then went to Morotai to pick up more troops. They were having lots of air raids, mostly at night. To me Morotai was five days of hell because no sooner would you get in your sack than you would have to jump out and run to your battle station, six or seven times a night."

But as a reward for his discomfort Quartermaster Dreyfors saw something better than a sea serpent to yarn about ashore.

"After leaving Morotai our convoy headed for Leyte. Just outside the gulf we were hopped by a torpedo plane that came in strafing. The CATSKILL, an LSV, was with us. The plane headed straight for her and dropped her torpedo. Seconds later the plane was hit and crashed, but the funny thing was the torpedo jumped completely out of the water, hopped over the fantail of CATSKILL, and went swimming out to sea!"

2

Other ships were not so lucky. The MOUNT HOOD, for instance, an ammunition ship. On November 10 she was anchored in Seeadler Harbor, in the Admiralties, laden with 4,000 tons of explosives.

There was no more war than in Bayonne, N.J. The 35,000-odd men at the great supply base had almost forgotten that war was anything but funneling troops and equipment into the forward areas. For months theirs had been a hot, sweaty life pushing heavy stuff around from sunup to sundown. But no bullets. Not until November 9, when three planes flew in and revealed themselves as Japanese by shooting up an Australian plane on the ground, demolishing a gas storage tank, a mail tent, and the snack bar. The raid was almost welcomed. It certainly broke the monotony. And it reminded them that the Japanese Empire was not dying so easily as many believed. But something that happened the next morning at eight o'clock reminded them of that even more forcibly.

At that hour smoke and flame suddenly shot up to masthead height from the midships section of MOUNT HOOD. As men ashore and on the decks of other ships gawked at the instantly terrifying spectacle a shattering explosion knocked their feet out from under them before they could take a step. Smoke mushroomed 7,000 feet into the air, and the area

within a quarter of a mile radius was blanketed by a smothering, impenetrable pall.

Lieutenant Lester H. Wallace, one of the ship's officers, who survived only because he had gone ashore with a party of eleven enlisted men twenty minutes before to pick up mail, said: "We were on the beach at the time and the mysterious explosion flattened us all. I jumped up immediately to look for my ship and saw nothing but debris.

"Two hours later Tokyo Rose came on the air reporting what had happened. She said the ship had been destroyed by a midget submarine. Eyewitnesses claimed to have seen a plane without markings dive and drop something close to the MOUNT HOOD. It was reported that one destroyer actually fired at a plane which flew out of the smoke. But the real cause was never known. Faulty ammunition might have caused it. I remember seeing some corroded pyrotechnics being taken aboard that dated as far back as 1915. Nineteen of MOUNT HOOD's crew were off the ship for various reasons; three were in the skipper's gig near the repair ship MINDANAO, two were in an LCM helping to deliver ammunition to the escort carrier OMMANEY BAY, one man was serving out a sentence in the Manus brig for sleeping on watch, and the supply officer was on the MINDANAO.

"Eighteen survived, all of those off the ship except the supply officer, Lieutenant Winfrey D. Collie, Jr. As fate would have it, he was killed instantly aboard the MINDANAO, which, of the 34 ships damaged in the blast, was hit worst of all, suffering nearly 200 casualties. The destroyer escort OBERRENDER, about 1,500 yards off our port quarter had some men killed and a big hole knocked in her side. Several 14-inch projectiles lay on her main deck. The auxiliary ship ARGONNE was heavily hit nearby. The destroyer tender PIEDMONT, nearly a mile away, had two 500-pound bombs fall through four of her decks without detonating. About ten LCMs and their crews, all tied up alongside, were missing."

The dead and missing totaled 372 and the wounded 371. The force of the explosion blasted a trough in the ocean over a city block long, 50 feet wide and from 30 to 40 feet deep. A fragment of metal 16 feet by 10 found on the ocean floor was the largest identifiable remnant of the MOUNT HOOD.

Had this explosion occurred closer to the United States it would have been talked about for years, like the Halifax explosion of World War I. But it happened in a part of the world where Nature, not Man, rules

and out of the area of war and war correspondents. The great scar on the floor of the ocean has already been filled by the shifting tides, however Time has dealt with the scars of the survivors and the bereaved.

3

What caused the explosion at Seeadler Harbor is a mystery but what caused the explosion and fire at Ulithi is not. It was definitely a Japanese torpedo, of a bizarre type—the Kamikaze's underwater counterpart.

A few minutes before sunrise on November 20 the minesweep *VIGILANCE* reported sighting a periscope off the channel entrance of Ulithi lagoon, that great harbor providentially provided as if for no other purpose than to be briefly indispensable to the United States Navy. Inside, as usual, were many units of the Third Fleet recuperating from extended fighting.

A few minutes after the sighting a task group of cruisers and destroyers on the way to Saipan spotted a periscope outside the harbor channel. The destroyers *CUMMINGS* and *CASE* leapt after it, and, minutes later, *CASE* reported having rammed a midget submarine.

At anchor in the harbor was the oiler *MISSISSINEWA*, one of the ships that had been serving the hard-striking Task Force 38 at sea. She was loaded to the gunwales with over 400,000 gallons of high-test aviation gas and nearly 100,000 barrels of fuel oil, a shining mark for the Japanese, themselves acutely conscious of tankers' importance.

Captain Philip G. Beck tells the story: "I was in my bunk just about to get up, at about 0545, when there was a heavy explosion which appeared to come from the port side forward. A second explosion followed immediately. I was thrown out of my bunk against the after bulkhead and finally landed on the deck. Somehow or other I knew we had been torpedoed. On looking up I saw flames shooting in through all the portholes like so many giant blow torches. To get up meant being burned to death, so I crawled out into the passageway before getting to my feet.

"There was a man lying on deck in the passageway, unconscious or dead. I dragged him out on deck and down the ladder to the midship boat deck. There I told two enlisted men who were running aft to take him with them, put a life jacket on him and throw him over the stern. I also told them to pass word for all hands to abandon ship over the stern.

"At this time the ship was burning furiously from midships forward.

Everything was on fire—hoses, lines, gun covers, lube oil, cargo decking. The ship started to sink by the head.

"I had on only my pajama trousers and these were on fire. So I discarded them and ran aft with the idea of opening the main steam smothering valve to the cargo tanks. But I found it was impossible to get to this valve because of live steam pouring out of ruptured lines. . . .

"The heat was terrific and ammunition was exploding all around. The engine room had been abandoned and there was no pressure on the fire main. We used two fire extinguishers to cool things off so we could make our way to the poop deck. I ordered all the men with me to jump. We all jumped about the same time. There was a channel about fifteen feet wide which was not covered with burning oil and through this we made our escape. . . ."

The *MISSISSINNEWA* settled by the bow and about two hours later slowly turned over and disappeared. Of the 298 in the crew, 60 had died, many trapped in their sleeping quarters by a rushing flood of burning oil and gasoline.

"The torpedo," continued Beck from the best information then available, "came from a midget submarine. He no doubt came in while the net was open for the task group of cruisers and destroyers to sortie that morning. The sub was seen to make a full left turn and proceed up the fairway after my ship had been torpedoed. This same sub fired a torpedo at the cruiser *MOBILE* but missed. In the meantime the alarm had gone off throughout the harbor and destroyers closed in, depth charged, and blew him up.

"There was a third submarine destroyed that morning about five miles to the eastward of the entrance by one of our bombing planes. The same day seven Japanese bodies were picked up. . . . These midget subs no doubt came from Yap, a small island about 85 miles to the west southwest of Ulithi, which was still in enemy hands."

But Captain Beck was wrong. It was not a midget submarine that sank his ship. It was an even more bizarre weapon—a "human torpedo."

This aquatic equivalent of the aerial Kamikaze consisted of a normal 24-inch torpedo body grafted onto a cylinder that housed the driver, the control mechanism, and a small periscope. The bow of the 30-foot craft was a torpedo warhead.

As the Americans advanced westward, the Japanese devised the so-called "Kaiten," or human torpedo, operations to attack shipping con-

centration points. Plans were made to attack the Admiralties, Humboldt Bay, Ulithi, Palau, and Guam.

In the early part of November three submarines departed Japan's Inland Sea. They were the I-36, the I-47 and the I-37, all large 2,100-tonners, all carrying human torpedoes. The first two were to attack Ulithi and the other Kossol Roads, Palau. Both attacks were to take place on November 20. Air reconnaissance had reported strong American fleet units at Ulithi and much traffic in and out of Kossol.

Early on the morning of the 20th the two mother submarines off Ulithi launched five Kaiten, with the results described above. The Japanese, as usual given to optimistic hyperbole, estimated from the flames and explosions observed off the reefs and from further air reconnaissance that "two aircraft carriers and three battleships" were sunk. With that the I-36 and the I-47 headed for home.

The I-37 did not fare so well. A few minutes before nine on the morning of November 19 the net-laying ship WINTERBERRY, while stretching a torpedo barrier across the western entrance to Kossol Passage, sighted a submarine that surfaced and quickly submerged.

Two nearby destroyer escorts, CONKLIN (Lieutenant Commander Edmund L. McGibbon) and MCCOY REYNOLDS (Lieutenant Commander Edwin K. Winn), were ordered to search out the enemy and destroy him.

Persistence and patience paid off when, in the middle of the afternoon, the submarine was located. There followed eight attacks and several hits by both DEs. The cork, oil, planking, and pieces of bodies that erupted to the surface documented the demise of the I-37. The Kaiten lay unused forever in her belly.

4

The Americans, too, struck from under the sea during November; struck two solar plexus blows that staggered the remnants of the Imperial Fleet.

The submarine SEALION was on patrol in the East China Sea between Shanghai and the northern tip of Formosa. Nothing much had been happening, just routine watch standing. A few planes had been spotted and a few hasty dives had been executed. But there had been nothing worth attacking. Junks and sampans were as thick as minnows off the China coast but there was no big stuff.

No big stuff, that is, until a few minutes after midnight on November 21.

The sea was calm and there was no moon, for the sky was overcast. The SEALION cruised on the surface nosing into Formosa Straits through whose protective confines all Japanese shipping funneled, all hands on the bridge staring hard into the night. Above their heads the radar reflector rotated silently, slowly sweeping the night with its far-reaching invisible nerve ends.

Suddenly the radar screen flicked bright with three pips. Targets! The range was extreme, so the targets perforce had to be unusually large to show on the glass.

Commander Eli I. Reich, skipper of SEALION, promptly headed the submarine toward the targets. As the distance closed, more pips showed up, now indicating four large ships in column screened by three others. The middle two ships were adjudged probably battleships; the other two would be cruisers, and the screening ships destroyers, of course.

It was a dark night, and the column was moving fast. Reich figured, and correctly, that the task force felt secure from attack due to its position and high speed. So he made the unusual decision to ambush the warships from the surface.

By a few minutes before three o'clock Reich had worked his boat into a good firing position in the path of the big ships. The range closed. The firing solution was good. Everything ready? Stand by . . . fire!

Six torpedoes plunged toward the first battleship, leaving not so much as a single bubble in their wakes. The SEALION quickly swung around to let go her three stern torpedoes at the second battleship.

Minutes later several explosions blossomed brightly crimson in the night—three on the first ship, one on the second. But that was all. They might have been fireworks for all the effect on the Japanese formation.

Reich sadly logged: "Chagrined at this point, for enemy group still making 16 knots . . . looks like we only dented the armor belt of the battleships."

He gave chase, hoping for another try. By this time the sea had begun to build up, and solid water was breaking over the bridge of the submarine with "plenty coming down the conning tower." But SEALION kept pace on the surface.

An hour passed, and a second one. Suddenly the first battleship veered

out of formation, and began to slow down. Two destroyers dropped back to be with her.

"Things beginning to look rosey again," logged Reich as he turned in for a second attack.

The battleship stopped dead in the water; a perfect target but an expended one because without warning there came a "tremendous explosion dead ahead—sky brilliantly illuminated.

"It looked like a sunset at midnight. Radar reports battleships pip getting smaller—that it has disappeared leaving only the two smaller pips of the destroyers. Destroyers milling around vicinity of target. Battleship sunk—the sun *set*. Total darkness again."

So perished the veteran battleship KONGO at last. British built, she had survived the greatest sea battles of the war—Midway, the Philippine Sea, Leyte Gulf. She had been one of the ships that had come close to annihilating Admiral Kinkaid's escort carrier force during that last great battle. She was the first and only battleship sunk by a submarine during the Pacific War.

The second catastrophic blow came a week later.

The Japanese had possessed the largest battleships afloat, the YAMATO and the MUSASHI.¹ They also possessed the largest aircraft carrier afloat, although she never launched a plane.

She was the SHINANO and was originally planned as a sister battleship of the two giants. But after the loss of four carriers during the Battle of Midway in 1942 the Japanese decided to convert her to an aircraft carrier. Except for her armor belt she had the same underwater hull as the YAMATO and displaced 71,890 tons fully loaded.

In November, 1944, she was approaching completion—as near to it as she would get. On November 18 she was commissioned and the next ten days were spent in bringing stores and ammunition aboard. Her complement totaled 1,900 officers and men.

She had been built and was being outfitted at the Yokosuka Navy Yard in Tokyo Bay. The Japanese were apprehensive of autumn carrier raids on Tokyo—and rightly, for if Leyte had gone according to plan Halsey would have struck the middle of November. So they decided to move SHINANO to the Inland Sea, that long, almost landlocked body of water in western Japan.

¹ Sunk by carrier aircraft during the Battle for Leyte Gulf. See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV.

On November 28, during the daylight hours, she steamed for her refuge. Substantially completed, except for two major items, a month's undisturbed work would put SHINANO into the fighting. Her compartments were not yet made watertight, and many holes through the bulkheads and decks for the uninstalled pipes and cables not having been sealed. Most of her pumps had not been delivered, either, so her fire mains and drainage systems were not in complete operation. As she sailed, her quarters were overcrowded with civilian technicians and workmen who would start putting on the finishing touches as soon as she dropped her hooks in a safe place.

That night she was making a blithe 20 knots, escorted by three destroyers, when at 0320 four torpedoes in a single salvo thrust through her starboard side and exploded in one vast metal-tearing, deck-bulging blast. Without adequate pumps and with compartments not watertight, the intrushing flood could not be checked. As the SHINANO, still making headway, began to list more and more the civilians—so rudely and instantly jerked from sleep into active war—became panicky. Being dressed in uniform, as is the Japanese fashion which even put its school children into visored caps and tight tunics, the civilian technicians were often mistaken for officers by the crew as they floundered about in the darkness screaming contradictory advice.

As dawn broke, all discipline was lost. Sailors infected with panic began jumping over the side. Stoically the captain ordered the Emperor's photograph removed from its place of honor on the bridge. It was ceremoniously wrapped and transferred by line to a destroyer alongside.

Just before noon SHINANO capsized to starboard, rolled bottom up, and then slid into oblivion stern first.

She had been torpedoed by the submarine ARCHER FISH (Commander Joseph F. Enright), which was standing by in Japanese waters on B-29 lifeguard duty. Not till after the war did the men of ARCHER FISH realize what a prize kill had been theirs.

CHAPTER SIX

The Tightening Noose

I

AFTER THE initial landings the Seventh Fleet, which General MacArthur called his navy, was quick to throw a sea noose around Leyte. The instruments for the naval garroting of the island were those fast, hard-hitting, hard-riding little boats that are known as PTs or, more formally, motor torpedo boats.

Theirs had been a spectacular and a well-fought war starting from the first futile defense of the Philippines. In the Solomons, from Tulagi to Bougainville; in New Guinea, from the tail of the dragon to the tip of his snout, from Milne Bay to Sansapor; in the Moluccas, Halmahera, and Morotai; the PTs had fought with Japanese barges and luggers, shore batteries, submarines, airplanes, and occasionally a destroyer or cruiser. Over 50,000 Japanese were starving in these by-passed areas, and one of the main reasons was the night coast-prowling activities of these boats.

Only about eighty feet in length, the PTs had the strength of a Goliath crammed into the frame of a David. They carried an assortment of numerous and deadly weapons—torpedoes, 50-caliber and 30-caliber machine guns; 20mm, 40mm, 37mm guns; rockets; depth charges. In short, enough to behave like a shrimp-sized battleship.

The PTs had come to Leyte with the first convoys, and before the Battle for Leyte Gulf was fought they were already nosing around the island shooting up barges near Ormoc. The story of how the PTs reported the approach of the Japanese Fleet and then struck the first blows of the Battle of Surigao Strait is well known.¹

Now, as the sweating soldiers of the Sixth Army pushed through the jungles of Leyte and as the Army Engineers and Seabees side by side fought with the mud of the airstrips, five squadrons of 43 boats operating from three tenders—OYSTER BAY, WACHAPREAGUE, WILLOUGHBY—sent nightly patrols around to the west coast of Leyte.

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV.

From their tenders anchored in San Pedro Bay the boats would wind up through narrow San Juanico Strait and out into Carigara Bay on the north coast of the island. Then they would work their way to the western side. Sometimes they would patrol athwart the neck of water between Leyte and Cebu, the route of all Japanese resupply convoys from the north; sometimes they nosed in toward the more confined waters between the Camotes Islands and Leyte; sometimes they probed into Ormoc Bay itself.

It was dangerous water, much too dangerous even for the PTs during daylight hours. But each night the little boats took healthy bites at the almost continuous barge traffic into western Leyte. Each morning when they returned to their tenders there would be reports of "five enemy barges attacked and destroyed" or "two enemy luggers encountered and destroyed by gun fire" or "four barges loaded with fuel and ammunition demolished or left completely ablaze."

2

Occasionally there was something even more spectacular to report such as when PT 497 on the morning of November 10 logged "three enemy destroyers intercepted, one sunk as result of torpedo attack . . ."

On the evening of November 9, PTs 497 (Lieutenant (jg) Joseph C. Beckman, Jr.) and 492 (Lieutenant (jg) Melvin W. Haines) set out from San Pedro Bay with the usual orders to intercept enemy forces reported heading for Ormoc. An Army B-24 had spotted the convoy north of Leyte, and Lightnings and Mitchells had attacked before sunset just as the convoy rounded the tip of the peninsula west of Ormoc. No ships were sunk. This was the convoy, it will be recalled, that carried the Japanese 26th Division.

Off this western peninsula are the Camotes Islands in the Camotes (Sweet Potato) Sea, as the water between Leyte and Cebu is called. At five minutes before midnight the two PTs nosed through Kawit Strait between two of the islands. The 492 promptly saw and reported two targets heading into Ormoc Bay.

Lieutenant Arthur M. Preston, aboard the 497 and officer in tactical command of the expedition, ordered the boats to head northeast along Ponson Island in order to make a torpedo attack.

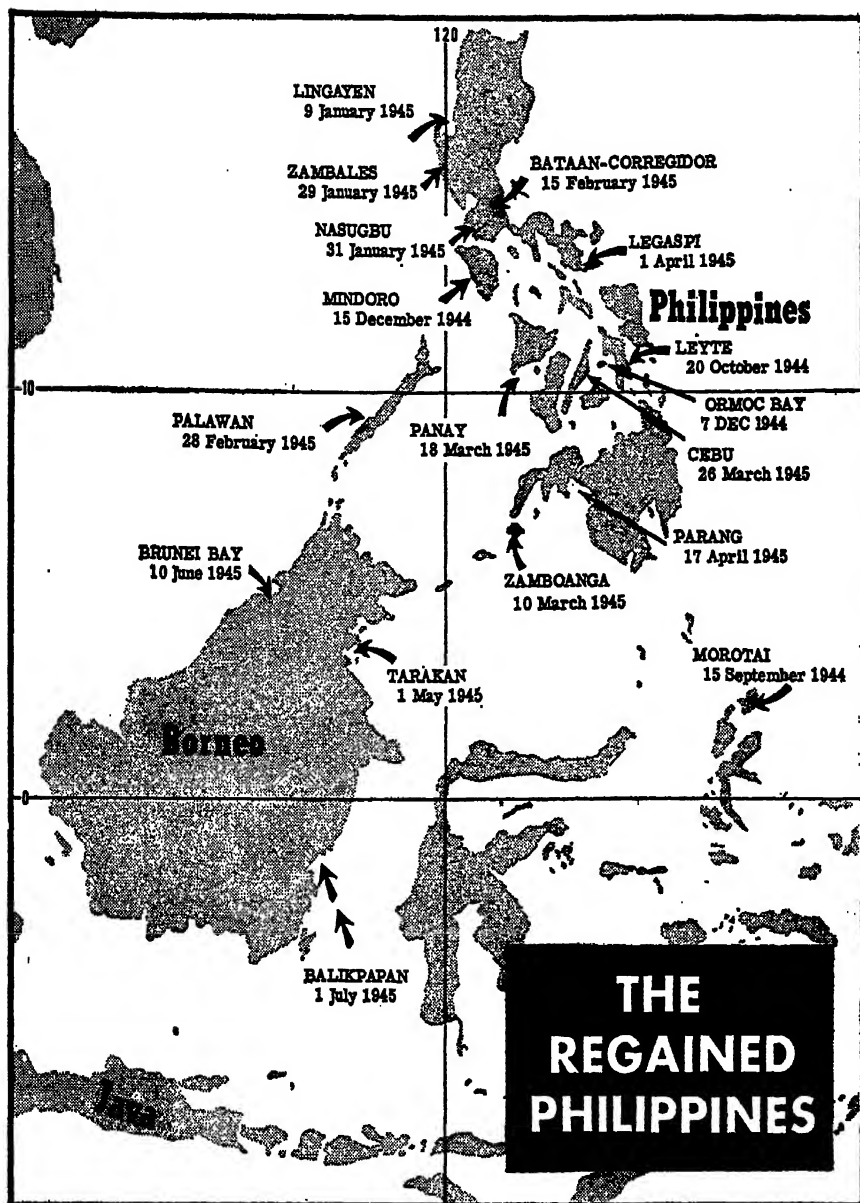


FIGURE 2

But when the boats were two miles from the northeast tip of the island three destroyers in column suddenly rounded the tip of the island and headed west. A perfect setup.

"Like shooting at metal ducks in a penny arcade."

"Yeah—but these ducks can shoot back."

The 497 closed the range to 2,000 yards as her crew quickly readied the torpedoes.

Ready!

Very well.

Fire! The two after torpedoes leapt into the darkness.

For a minute the watch ticked.

Fire! The two forward torpedoes followed.

All torpedoes were running "hot, straight and normal."

The 497 twirled and headed back toward the protection of Kawit Strait. The stop watch ticked on.

Two minutes later a large silver-white explosion split the night, yellowing to an orange blaze that was blotted by oily smoke. The aim had been good.

And 497 opened up her mufflers and ran hell-bent for the strait.

The race that followed was wild and spectacular. Like an enraged cyclops the second destroyer swept the sea with its searchlight and caught the 492 in its beam. Then she spat furiously with her 5-inch guns. The salvos straddled.

Both PTs started weaving at high speed and laying puffs of smoke as the two destroyers leaped to the chase, firing as they came. The two peewees fired back as vigorously, at the white beam that clung to them, but with no better luck than the destroyers'.

The range had closed to three-quarters of a mile before the two PTs could duck into the narrow Kawit Strait where the two destroyers had to give up the chase for fear of ambush.

The day's log of the 497 was completed with the tersely accurate entry: "Returned to base at 1045."

3

On Leyte the slow, fatiguing advance overland continued. Nothing sensational, nothing hurried, nothing to write home about. Just a steady, unrelenting pressure. Krueger's well-devised tactics were piling up

dividends. The Japanese had to abandon their more brilliant, but also more brittle, plan to push a wedge into the American forces and to drive the severed parts into the sea. Instead they had to concentrate more and more on the 7th Division's encirclement.

Krueger, toward the middle of November, wanted to land a division at Ormoc to cut the enemy supply line and squeeze the Japanese in Ormoc Valley into extinction. But from the Navy's point of view there were difficulties with this plan.

First, the Kamikazes were not under control. The air advantage was gradually shifting to our side, it was true, but not enough to protect an exposed convoy on the other side of Leyte.

Second, there was a shortage of assault shipping for landing and resupply. The seizure of Mindoro—a vital steppingstone on the path to Luzon—was scheduled for December 5 and MacArthur seemed determined to meet that date. The Seventh Fleet, hard pressed to furnish the lift and protection for this operation, could hardly commit itself to an intermediate operation at Ormoc.

Still it rained—35 inches in forty days, more than twice the annual rainfall of the state of Colorado. Work on the Buri and San Pablo airstrips had to be abandoned. The strip at Dulag was partially usable by November 19. But this one, plus miry Tacloban, was hardly enough to provide the Air Force with the footing it had to have to counter the Japanese air menace.

But any kind of airstrip in American hands was obnoxious to the enemy. On the night of November 26 the Japanese made an abortive attempt at aerial sabotage. Just after darkness three transport planes landed in the surf on the east coast of Leyte. Thirty men plunged ashore with demolition material, but all the demolition accomplished that night happened to them at the hands of the alert Army. A fourth aircraft, attempting to land at the Buri strip, was shot down.

Two more planes of this demolition group flew wide of their mark—to put it mildly. They were ordered to disgorge their saboteurs at the Tacloban airstrip. By the time they reached Leyte, however, it was dark and the navigation had not been so good. The pilots, thinking they were near Tacloban, landed in shallow water just off the beaches. When the demolition squads reached shore, they were surprised to find themselves surrounded by Japanese. They had landed in Ormoc Bay instead of San Pedro Bay on the other side of the island.

Documents were recovered from the bodies of some of the Japanese which outlined a plan for an airborne operation against the airfields of Leyte. From a fleet of transport aircraft, covered by a large force of fighters and bombers, paratroopers were to be dropped on all airstrips on the island. Simultaneously enemy troops would attack eastward from the mountains in the central part of the island.

It is always nice to know what an enemy plans to do, and this was the second time on Leyte that we had been tipped off by dead Japanese. Why men were sent on such desperate missions with top-secret plans in their pockets has never been explained, even by the now loquaciously co-operative Japanese themselves.

4

Day and night air alerts sounded across San Pedro Bay, sending ships' crews dashing to battle stations. Most often the enemy raids were directed at the Tacloban airstrip, but he went roaring in at the ships frequently enough for those aboard. Even the tiny PTs were not exempt from the diving fury. During the predawn of November 5 the PT 320, anchored in the bay, was attacked by a dive bomber and completely demolished. That was superlative shooting, it must be admitted. Only one man survived of the fifteen on board.

Then the attack transports ALPINE and JAMES O'HARA and the LST 66 were hit by suiciders. And the landing craft repair ships (converted LSTs) ACHILLES and EGERIA, plus almost a score of merchant ships. It was Manila Bay in reverse, the Second Battle for Leyte Gulf.

The day after the abortive saboteur raid on the airstrips, on November 27, Japanese Army and Navy aircraft struck in full suicide force at the battleships, cruisers, and destroyers patrolling Leyte Gulf.

Rear Admiral Theodore D. Ruddock, Jr., in charge of the force, had been called in by Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid for a conference on coming operations. Captain Herbert J. Ray, skipper of the battleship MARYLAND, was SOPA—Senior Officer Present Afloat—and in command of the task group.

The Kamikazes came down from the skies that morning like a stampede of comets. For the many that were knocked off their course by the ships' guns to fall harmlessly into the sea, or to explode in mid-air, many got through. Two crashed into the cruiser ST. LOUIS. One smashed

the battleship COLORADO and another exploded close aboard. Four dived on the MONTPELIER, but that cruiser escaped with minor hurts.

Following the suiciders, in a well-timed one-two punch, a group of torpedo planes sped in low. The timing was good, but that of the American gunners was better. All were shot down, and MARYLAND swerved just in time to escape the only torpedo that was dropped.

The Tacloban P-38s urgently summoned by Captain Ray could provide "absolutely no defense." They were forced to leave the area because of "closing weather at the base." Perversely weather over the task group was fair, certainly fair enough for the Japanese. By noon a flight of P-38s worked their way into the clear to chase the last of the enemy and to down one laggard plane.

Two days later the suiciders returned again. The MARYLAND's luck ran out, and she took a Kamikaze between the stacks. The destroyers AULICK and SAUFLEY were also badly mangled that day and the little SC 744, not a part of the same group, was sunk. A week later two destroyers, MUGFORD and DRAYTON, three LSMs, and one merchant ship were crashed and variously damaged, but it was the last desperate flurry. The Battle for the Gulf was over.

All eyes and efforts were now turning to the west.

5

The Japanese Air Force combined with Leyte's rain, mud and jungle, and a reinforced Japanese Army, to make recapture of the Philippines much tougher and slower than had been anticipated when the original plans were drawn up at General MacArthur's headquarters in Hollandia.

Even so, General MacArthur was determined that the Philippine operation would run on schedule. D-day for Mindoro, the large island just south of Luzon, had been scheduled for December 5 and as far as MacArthur was concerned there would be no delay. However, MacArthur's naval commander, Admiral Kinkaid, boss of the Seventh Fleet, held a different view.

Here, in their own language, is the story of a high command's on-the-spot planning—the kind mentioned in the opening pages of this book.

"In the plans set up at Hollandia," said Kinkaid, "all Philippine invasions were predicated on the assumption that we would have complete control of the air in the Central Visayas—which we didn't have.

"The over-all plan called for Mindoro first, then Lingayen Gulf, the idea being the land-based planes from Mindoro could support Lingayen Gulf landings. [Lingayen is on the west coast of Luzon, north of Manila.] We didn't want Mindoro. She had nothing. But we did plan to set up airfields on Mindoro and activate them very quickly.

"For the Mindoro operation control of the air was absolutely necessary and the Army still didn't have enough planes. General MacArthur called me to his headquarters for a conference.

" 'The Mindoro operation must not be delayed,' MacArthur warned.

"It was then that I agreed to send CVEs through Surigao Strait with the sole mission of covering the convoy. I didn't want to send those small carriers on that type of combatant mission because they weren't designed for such duty; they were designed for escort work only.

" 'After the landing all combatant ships must come back to Leyte,' I told MacArthur. 'They cannot stay in the area without complete air control. I also feel that the Japs are almost sure to come in and bombard your beach positions with their remaining surface force.'

" 'That's all right,' replied MacArthur. 'As soon as our troops and equipment get ashore they can be dispersed and the bombardment will do no harm.' "

So Kinkaid went back to *WASATCH*, his flagship, to think the matter over. In the early planning he had intended to send only sixteen destroyers to Mindoro. Now he would need carriers, battleships, and cruisers too.

He sent for Admiral Ruddock to talk the matter over.

Ruddock received Kinkaid's summons for a conference while steaming with his battleships on the outer fringe of Leyte Gulf. Ruddock called for a destroyer for transportation and soon was in Kinkaid's stateroom.

"I think MacArthur wants to send some CVEs to Mindoro. What do you think?" asked Kinkaid.

"I think it's plain suicide," replied slender, sharp-tongued Ruddock.

"What do you want—when you go?" again queried Kinkaid.

Ruddock got up, paced back and forth across the stateroom drawing heavily on his cigarette. He fully expected that he would be towing half his ships back with the other half and that none of the small carriers would survive. Finally Ruddock broke the silence.

"I would like 6 CVEs, 4 battleships, 4 cruisers, and 30 destroyers."

"You can have 6 CVEs, 3 battleships, 3 cruisers, and 18 destroyers," returned Kinkaid.

"Well, where are the carriers and when do we start?" asked Ruddock.

"The carriers are steaming to the eastward serving as cover for Leyte Gulf."

"But, Admiral, we can't use those carriers. Some of them fought in the Battle for Leyte Gulf and have had steady steaming ever since. They're all worn out."

"Then we'll get some fresh ones," said Kinkaid.

At this point the plans were still unchanged. D-day for Mindoro was December 5. Ruddock returned to WEST VIRGINIA and began his plans.

"Air intelligence reported that the Japs had between 700 and 750 planes within 150 miles of the Sulu Sea," recalled Ruddock. "They also estimated that the Japs could not put over 100 planes in the air at one time for a concentrated attack because of the incapacity of their airfields.

"But 100 planes, 100 suicide planes . . . Well, I had to think that one over. I talked to Struble [Rear Admiral Arthur D.] who was to command the Mindoro Attack Force. Struble thought we would just get the hell pounded out of us."

Ruddock decided that the risks were too great and began writing a Top-Secret Memorandum to Kinkaid.

"In my opinion," wrote Ruddock, "the time is not appropriate for an invasion of Mindoro. We are courting disaster if the intelligence estimates are correct regarding the volume and known capabilities of the Japanese Air Force. None of our ships would return undamaged and probably no carriers would survive. In addition to the suicide plane menace it is estimated that 7 or 8 fleet type as well as many midget submarines are operating in the Sulu Sea. We will be operating in confined waters with limited speed. My earnest recommendation is that the operation be postponed until air superiority, but not necessarily complete control of the air, has been established by land-based planes."

Kinkaid had talked also to Rear Admiral Felix Stump, the escort carrier man, about the Mindoro operation. "Stump thought it was a rather hazardous undertaking, but agreed to do the best he could, which is all I can ask of any commander," said Kinkaid.

After listening to Stump and after reading Ruddock's memorandum, Kinkaid decided to take the matter up once again with MacArthur. The Commander in Chief, with the Navy's unanimous advice before him, made the decision. For Mindoro, a ten-day delay was ordered and for Lingayen Gulf, twenty days.

With the Mindoro operation shoved back ten days it was now possible to reconsider Krueger's project of a landing at Ormoc. The shipping necessary to lift, support, and resupply troops landed at Ormoc was available. But it would be a dangerous operation still, because of the precarious air situation. And any damage to shipping during the Ormoc operation would affect not only the Mindoro landing but the later Lingayen assault as well.

But it was worth the risk. The date was set—December 7, the third anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor—and the preparations begun.

Meanwhile the Japanese kept a steady stream of men and supplies funneling into Ormoc. Admiral Kinkaid decided to beef up the PT boats fighting each night in that area with some bigger stuff—destroyers.

The first *Tasmania Operation*, as the destroyer sweeps of Ormoc were called, was executed on the night of November 27–28 by the destroyers WALLER (Commander Harry L. Thompson, Jr.), RENSHAW (Commander George H. Cairnes), SAUFLEY (Commander Dale E. Cochran), and PRINGLE (Lieutenant Commander John L. Kelley, Jr.).

The ships slipped into Ormoc Bay undetected but found the harbor bare. So they consoled themselves with bombarding the beaches for an hour.

Shortly after midnight the Black Cat flying boat that was serving as elevated night eyes for the destroyers reported what appeared to be a surfaced submarine two miles south of the Camotes Islands.

So the destroyers knocked off bombarding and went sub hunting. After a fruitless sweep of the Camotes Sea, Captain Robert H. Smith, commander of the squadron and riding in WALLER, decided to take his ships back around to the American side of the island. But just then a bright pip showed up on WALLER's radar.

"Skunk bearing three-one-zero, range one-oh-two-double-oh," sang out the radar operator." (Skunk is sea language for a suspicious object on the water.)

Smith ordered all his ships to open fire on the target while WALLER illuminated with star shells. Four minutes later the "skunk" was sighted—a Jap submarine.

"Let's ram 'er," said Smith, turning to Commander Thompson, WALLER's skipper.

As WALLER pivoted the submarine opened fire with her deck gun and several machine guns. The WALLER charged in while her sister destroyers hung dozens of ghostly suns over the two combatants.

As WALLER rapidly closed the range Smith saw that the enemy was riddled with bullet holes. He suddenly decided not to ram.

"Left full rudder!"

The WALLER heeled in a tight circle pumping 40mms into the Jap. Then one of her forward 5-inchers smashed a direct hit into the conning tower. It was the end and the Japs knew it, for they started a mad scramble for the escape hatches. Seconds later the I-46, a 2,100-ton submarine and one of Japan's newest, pointed her bow toward the moon and made her last dive.

Many survivors were left swimming about the debris-cluttered sea but there was not enough time to coax a few aboard. The destroyers had to be clear of the Camotes Sea by 0330 and it was nearing that time. So Smith ordered his destroyers into formation and headed for Surigao Strait.

Not to be outdone by their big sisters, the PTs the next night got a killing in Ormoc Bay. A large Japanese convoy had just moved in.

Four PTs left their base at San Pedro Bay together and worked their way around the island. They were the PT 331 (Ensign William P. West) and the PT 127 (Ensign Dudley J. Johnson), which were assigned to the Ormoc Bay area, and the PT 128 (Lieutenant (jg) Gregory J. Azarigian) and the PT 191 (Lieutenant (jg) Nelson Davis) which were to patrol the Camotes Islands. Lieutenant Robert H. Hallowell rode the 127 as officer in tactical command.

About nine o'clock that evening 127 and 331 arrived on station on the western side of Ormoc Bay. Hugging the coast and with mufflers closed, they proceeded cautiously into the bay.

Near Porto Bello, a small town on the western side of the bay, radar contact was made with a ship anchored about a quarter of a mile off the beach. Both boats closed to attack.

When range had closed to three-quarters of a mile the superstructure of an escort vessel could be seen silhouetted by the light of the full moon. But the Japanese had night eyes too and they saw the two squatty boats slipping in. The guns from the ship and the batteries from shore opened up and the night was laced with burning tracers. The 127 let go with all four torpedoes and continued in. At 900 yards she unleashed fifteen

rockets as a final coup de grâce. Twirling she dashed away, laying a heavy smoke screen as she ran.

A heavy explosion shook the bay and smoke billowed skyward from the anchored ship. A torpedo had definitely found its mark.

In spite of the heavy shore fire, in spite of the Japanese plane that swooped over the boats and unleashed a bomb, the two boats came about for a second attack—this time on three transports that had been seen near the Ormoc docks. Two more torpedoes were fired, this time from the 331, and another gratifying explosion followed.

The two boats retired, escorted by a Japanese plane which sped them on their way with strafing runs that may have killed some fishes.

Now it was the other two PTs' turn to go in. Lieutenant Hallowell transferred to 128 for another swat at the transports. Again two beetlelike boats eased into the bay, dark blobs on the gray-silver water. Again torpedoes cut phosphorescent streaks across the sea, again there was an explosion, again Japanese guns spat back at the elusive attackers, again Jap planes missed with their bombs, and again the boats escaped, laying blobs of smoke behind them. That was PT service. The same damn thing over and over and over again—if you lived.

On the night of December 1-2 the PTs and the destroyers teamed up to sink a freighter, between Masbate Island and the northwest tip of Leyte. A lone freighter traveling south without escort was spotted by two of the boats which attacked with torpedoes and bullets. But the freighter came on, all guns blazing. Two more PTs were radioed onto the scene but they too missed with their torpedoes. The bright full moon enabled the Jap gunners to keep the boats at ineffectual distance.

Meanwhile Destroyer Division 44 (Captain Walter L. Dyer) composed of four destroyers¹ was making a sweep of the Camotes Sea without finding anything to shoot at. Then about two o'clock in the morning faint radio signals were heard from the PT 491 (Lieutenant (jg) Harley A. Thomson). Through much interference the message was deciphered that a well-armed freighter was proceeding south. The destroyers quickly headed toward the reported position.

Radar contact was made, the range closed, and all destroyers opened fire. Five minutes later the freighter exploded and sank.

Leyte's back yard was rapidly becoming as unsafe for the Japanese as its front yard.

¹CONWAY (Comdr. John H. Besson, Jr.), CONY (Comdr. Allen W. Moore), EATON (Comdr. Chesford Brown), and SIGOURNEY (Lt. Comdr. Fletcher Hale, Jr.).

7

Navy men called the Battle of Surigao Strait a hot one. The Battle off Samar was even worse. But the destroyer sweep of Ormoc Bay on the night of December 1-2, 1944, came closer to resembling an artistic conception of war at sea than any other battle in the Pacific.

"The men of Mars will have to step up production and renovate their methods of warfare if they want to beat what went on in Ormoc Bay that night," said Commander Norman J. Sampson, skipper of the ALLEN M. SUMNER, flagship of the group of three destroyers that engaged in the melee.

The new 2,200-ton ALLEN M. SUMNER looked like the ideal ship to employ on surface raids. She had two twin 5-inch mounts forward and one twin mount aft; she could bring two-thirds of her main battery to bear and yet present only her knife-like bow as a target.

"The first warning that our new destroyers might be used in Ormoc came shortly after Squadron 60 reported for duty in Leyte Gulf," said Captain John C. Zahm, who was officer in tactical command of the 3-ship sweep.

"Vice Admiral James L. Kauffman, who had just reported as Commander Philippine Sea Frontier, called me over for a conference. He pulled out a map of Leyte and, pointing a finger to Ormoc Bay, simply said, 'The Japs are still reinforcing Ormoc, and I think the 2,200-ton can is the ship to stop them.'"

He casually winked at Captain Zahm and the conference ended.

"I read the operation order after my division was underway for the target," continued Zahm. "We were supposed to have air cover, but because of low visibility on our side of the island, friendly planes were unable to take off the Tacloban airstrip.

"Bad weather didn't stop the Japs. They nailed us when we were about one hour out of Ormoc and started strafing and bombing."

Actually the destroyers got action soon after getting underway. A lone Jap plane came too close to the ships and was down in flames shortly after dark. This was the first hint that the Japs knew the group was coming. However, the ships sped on their mission despite continuous bogies.

"The light of a full moon was diffused just enough by a high 'California' fog to make the ships easily visible from the air," related Commander Sampson. "Suddenly, just after eleven o'clock, there was a loud

whoosh—and we had been hit by a bomb. In less time than it takes to tell, fire broke out aboard ship. I clearly saw the 'Frances' as it passed over the top of the mast, and the main batteries of all three ships went into action.

"The real battle, however, was just beginning. Exactly at midnight, our destroyers found their targets in Ormoc Bay. It looked like the Japs were unloading troops and supplies."

Captain Zahm had to make a stern decision when he chose to press the strike, after he learned that he was not going to have air cover for the operation.

"My plan," related Zahm, "was to keep my ships abreast in a line of bearing in order that we could bring all forward batteries to bear on our targets. I was taking advantage of the characteristics of our ships, and at the same time presenting the minimum target to the enemy."

Commander Mell Peterson's COOPER was first to open fire. His gunnery officer, Lieutenant Frank Swint, was right on target.

"I could follow our tracers and see a big ball of fire when our shells hit the enemy ship," said Peterson. "There was so much to shoot at that we couldn't fire at everything."

Opening fire shortly after COOPER, the SUMNER cut loose with a full salvo at the troop-laden ship, which was soon obscured by flames. Meanwhile the third destroyer, MOALE (Commander Walter M. Foster), had selected another target on her starboard and was gunning at her with everything aboard.

"Our laddered salvos were also landing in a warehouse or shed, which we saw go to pieces," continued Sampson. "A big crane, used for unloading Jap ships, was seen to topple over. At that moment we were forced to shift to an air target which was dangerously close. In the meantime, a torpedo wake was sighted on the starboard bow and for a minute or two all guns were firing and the SUMNER was heeling crazily, first to one side and then to the other.

"During this rumpus shell splashes were popping all around our destroyers. Ships, submarines, torpedo boats, planes, and shore batteries were all firing at us. The bombs that kept dropping out of the sky, however, took most of our attention aboard SUMNER."

Commander Peterson, for his part, said he couldn't keep his eyes off the shells that were splashing toward his ship from the guns behind Ormoc Town's hills.

Shortly after midnight MOALE opened fire on a fast-moving surface

target, identified as a small destroyer or escort craft. Then the two other destroyers joined in, and to make things merrier one enemy PT boat became confused and fired machine guns at the sinking Japanese ship. A minute later MOALE shifted to a Jap plane coming in on the starboard side and commenced swerving to dodge torpedoes that were streaking toward her, and the COOPER slowed to take a few cracks at transports revealed by the gaudy fireworks to be hiding in coves.

Commander Peterson felt, rather than heard, a thud on the starboard side of his ship, and then an upward impact which hurt his heels like a blow from a sledge hammer. Water and steam sprayed all over the bridge and the destroyer heeled over 45 degrees.

"My first thought was that she would come back; my second thought was to glance forward and aft to see if anybody was still aboard before I dove into the water."

The COOPER sank just that fast. In less than a minute—36 seconds, to be exact. It is likely that she was hit by a big torpedo fired from one of the two submarines in the bay.

The COOPER literally went down fighting. Her last salvo roared to its target a split second after the death-dealing torpedo ricocheted from the water close aboard. In fourteen blazing minutes she had knocked down two Jap dive bombers, assisted in sinking one destroyer, and damaged another.

The COOPER broke in half and sank so quickly the 190 men and 10 officers went down with the ship; only the personnel topside were able to abandon ship.

"When the SUMNER and MOALE turned to leave the bay," said Sampson, "a Jap destroyer was headed directly for our ship. All guns opened up against her.

"The tracers from the 40-millimeter guns were so close together that a truck could have been driven across the path of their arching destruction. The Jap can didn't last long. My last glimpse of the scene was a white haze of smothered steam rising slowly from the water. The spot where a Jap destroyer had been looked calm and peaceful.

"Our immediate vicinity, however, was not peaceful. Their planes were strafing us and we were getting some bombs close aboard. It was high time for us to get out—get out if we could.

"I'm sorry I can't report more fully what happened that night. A nightmare is a difficult experience to describe."

When the Japs let up with their air attacks, it was 0306. The SUMNER

and the MOALE had been under attack for four hours. The hulls of both American ships were punctured from stern to stern with bullet holes. The SUMNER had 14 men wounded and MOALE had 4 dead and 21 wounded.

"After our ships left Ormoc Bay, it became quiet as a mill pond," said Commander Peterson, who was left behind, bobbing around with the other COOPER survivors in Ormoc Bay. "It was a beautiful night but the water got cold after a few hours.

"The ship's supply officer, Lieutenant (jg) Jerry Killigrew, had issued hot coffee and hot soup to all hands just prior to the action, which helped to keep us warm. Not all of the men could get aboard the rafts and floater nets, so eight or ten would lie in a raft at a time while fifteen others would swim alongside.

"The men's spirits were buoyed at one time when big Coxswain Chester G. Burke sang out that he would never take another drink as long as he lived.

"Next morning we saw two submarines and two small DE type vessels sail out of Ormoc Bay. They were all blowing police whistles, apparently to identify themselves to friendly forces.

"Some of our men made it to the small island of Ponson and to northwest Leyte to await rescue, which was accomplished in two days. All but Lieutenant Orr and his party were picked up on the first day by PBYs. A world's record for weight carrying was established in the first two trips. One plane, piloted by Lieutenant Joe Ball, had a total of 64 on board, which included 56 survivors. Another plane, flown by Lieutenant (jg) Melvin S. Essary carried out 45 survivors. No one knows how all of these men got into the planes, but they took off with 3,000 more pounds than the designers of the PBY thought possible."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Through the Backdoor . . .

I

BY THE FIRST WEEK in December the Japanese had been pushed into a sacklike area in northwestern Leyte. The enemy was still spirited and numerous but what the final outcome of the fighting was to be was all too clear.

The Americans had finally cracked through the stubborn Japanese defenses at Breakneck Ridge and were pushing south on Highway No. 2 into Ormoc Valley. Simultaneously other troops were pushing north along the west coast toward Ormoc. In central Leyte the Americans had fought through almost incredibly tough enemy resistance to the spine of the island. Two more divisions, the 11th Airborne and the 32nd Infantry, had joined the original four in the fighting while yet another division, the 77th Infantry, was loading into the assault ships of the Seventh Fleet for the attack on Ormoc.

The attack force was composed of thirteen destroyers,¹ eight destroyer transports, twenty-seven Landing Craft Infantry, three Landing Ship Tank, twelve Landing Ship Medium (smaller version of the LST), nine minesweepers, two small submarine chasers, four LCIs rigged with rockets and one rescue tug—just in case. The destroyer HUGHES carried Rear Admiral Arthur D. Struble, Commander of the Attack Force, and Major General Andrew Bruce, Commander of the 77th Division.

¹ Escort Unit was under command of Commander Destroyer Squadron 60, Captain William L. Freseman, whose flag was in BARTON (Comdr. Edwin B. Dexter). Other ships included WALKER (Comdr. George F. Davis); LAFFEY (Comdr. Fred J. Becton); O'BRIEN (Comdr. William W. Outerbridge); FLUSSER (Comdr. Theodore R. Vogeley); flagship for Comdesron 5, Captain William M. Cole; LAMSON (Comdr. John V. Noel, Jr.); EDWARDS (Lt. Comdr. Simon E. Ramey); SMITH (F) (Comdr. Frank B. List), Desdiv 10 (Capt. Herald F. Stout); REID (Comdr. Samuel A. McCornock); CONYNGHAM (Comdr. Brown Taylor); MAHAN (Comdr. Earnest G. Campbell).

First to get underway, as always, were the minesweepers.¹ Early in the morning of December 6 they departed Leyte Gulf and headed for Canigao Channel. It was feared that the Japanese might have mined that narrow stretch of water off southwestern Leyte which connects the Mindanao and the Camotes Sea.

Theirs was the first action of the operation. At eight o'clock four blunt-winged Japanese Navy fighters dropped through an opening in the clouds. One splashed close aboard *REQUISITE* before any ship could open fire. The second was destroyed in mid-air by AA bursts while trying to dive on *SAUNTER*. A P-38 shot down the third, while the fourth went home without making the supreme sacrifice. The Army Air Force would have to be forgiven more than once during the operation.

2

The main convoy sailed quietly that day down through Surigao Strait out into the Mindanao Sea and then northwest toward the Camotes Sea without so much as being shadowed by a single Jap patrol plane. At dusk one destroyer picked up a small surface target on the radar screen but it turned out to be a sailing banca trying to keep clear of the convoy. Her native crew carried nothing more warlike than fresh vegetables and fish.

That night, too, was quiet for the convoy. Gun flashes from a group of destroyers making a sweep of Ormoc Bay could occasionally be seen, as could the sickly yellow flares dropped by Japanese planes. But no planes closed the convoy until five in the morning, when a lone aircraft dropped two bombs wide of the destroyer *SMITH*.

The point selected for the landing was the small village of Desposito about four miles south of Ormoc Town. After a twenty-minute bombardment by destroyers and the rocket-toting LCIs, the troops went ashore at seven minutes after seven. The only casualty was a doughboy who was accidentally shot in the leg while wading in.

By nine o'clock all the vessels were unloaded with the exception of

¹ Minesweepers included *PURSUIT* (Lt. Comdr. Roscoe F. Good); *REQUISITE* (Lt. Comdr. Herbert R. Peirce, Jr.); *SAGE* (Lt. Comdr. Franklin K. Zinn); *TRIUMPH* (Lt. Comdr. Car R. Cunningham, Jr.); *SALUTE* (Lt. John R. Hodges); *SAUNTER* (Lt. Comdr. James R. Keefer (Unit Commander)); *SCOUT* (Lt. E. G. Anderson, Jr.); *SCRIMMAGE* (Lt. Robert Van Winkle); and *SENTRY* (Lt. Comdr. Thomas R. Fonick). Commander Ellsworth D. McEathron, *Cominron 10*, had tactical command of the group.

one LSM and one LCI, which were caught on the reef. All had gone well, all had been quiet, and now the ships were ready for their return voyage around the island to the gulf.

But they weren't to get off that easily.

The first air attack was by a twin-engined plane that came in fast from the east, while the ships were pulling off the beach and forming up. It was quickly hit by ships' AA fire and finally shot down by a covering P-38.

As the smoking Jap plane disappeared overland, a radio message from Admiral Kinkaid, aboard his flagship *MC KINLEY* on the other side of the island, came through to Admiral Struble aboard *HUGHES*: "Enemy Task Force consisting of four transports and seven escorts 60 miles northwest of Ormoc on a southerly course."

This was confirmed by an Army bomber, a B-25 which had been patrolling to the northwest. Circling the destroyer *MAHAN* and using a blinker light, the bomber told of sighting the convoy heading for Ormoc.

The Japanese, it seemed, had planned to land troops at Ormoc on the same day as the Americans—only they didn't get there first.

On receiving this news, Struble sent two destroyers out to "take appropriate action." But before they had left the bay the Commander of the Fifth Air Force sent a message saying "We will take care of them." Which they proceeded to do quite effectively—with Marine Corsairs.

Soon another message came through from Admiral Kinkaid, who was becoming slightly anxious about the landing. "Report progress" was all the message said.

"Operation progressing favorably and we should be off the beach by 1100," replied Struble.

Well, the Admiral was right, according to all the information in hand. He couldn't know what was over the horizon, fast as it was coming up behind the hills.

3

Nobody knew, until a formation of enemy bombers and fighters suddenly began circling the bay like pigeons in a conjurer's trick. The first group concentrated on *MAHAN*, and was met by three P-38s before it reached Ormoc Bay. Most of the personnel observing the aerial circus felt that it would amount to nothing more than another dog fight.

"Is this the way they did it in the South Pacific, Captain?" asked one

estroyer man of his skipper, a veteran of the Solomons fighting. Just then three Jap dive bombers broke away from the dog fight and plummeted toward the WARD, one hitting her amidships and the others crashing nearby. The interrogator swallowed his cud of tobacco, and never heard his skipper's emphatic reply:

"Hell, no. I've never seen anything like this before."

Nor had anybody. Some had seen Kamikazes by the half dozen, but there was a whole sky filled with them, striving to evade the P-38s so that they could dive into the ships.

Commander Earnest G. Campbell, skipper of MAHAN, tells what happened to his ship after four Zekes (Navy fighters) and nine Sallys (medium bombers) decided to concentrate on him.

"We were at general quarters and all set for anything that might happen except so many suicide planes," said Commander Campbell. "Just after we commenced firing, three of our own fighter cover, P-38s, zoomed down and jumped the Zekes and bombers. Immediately the bombers peeled off in suicide dives, one following the other down. The only thing that saved most of us from getting killed was our gunners, who kept shooting when the situation looked hopeless.

"The attack all happened very quickly; it was over in approximately two minutes. The bombers dived at very high speed—probably around 300 knots. We didn't shoot down the first plane until he'd gotten about 50 yards off the ship and I personally had given up hope. He was headed right for the bridge where I was standing when he suddenly blew up. With the exception of one plane that our five-inch guns shot down when about 2,500 yards from the ship, the others got in very close before they were shot down.

"The first plane that hit us knocked the foremast down on top of the main battery director and knocked the forward stack down, tore off the after side of the bridge, started tremendous fires throughout the forward superstructure and ruptured fuel tanks forward. All power was lost to the five-inch guns, which shifted immediately to local control and kept firing.

"I remember two machine-gunners who, like everybody else, had been knocked off their feet when the first plane struck. Immediately they jumped to their feet to take a bomber under fire that was following behind the one that had hit us. Although dazed, these boys without flinching, without thinking about running for cover, scrambled right back to

their 20mm gun and began shooting at the plane which was then about 500 yards from them and headed directly for their station. The suicide pilot, at the last minute, sent strafing bullets at the men, who returned bullet for bullet until the plane bored into the side of the ship directly under their feet. The plane hit about twenty feet below them at the water line and started more fires and explosions. By this time that inferno from the first plane was coming through the deck around their gun, but instead of abandoning their station, they took another plane under fire that was attacking the stern of the ship.

"Although three planes bored right into the side of our ship, I feel that the courageous action of the gun crews saved many lives. We shot down four of the planes; the P-38s shot down one and apparently some got away.

"When the fire mains ruptured the fires got out of control, spread to the magazines, and I gave the word to abandon ship."

The planes that attacked MAHAN actually had been sighted first by WARD, a destroyer transport veteran of many Pacific landings, whose skipper, Lieutenant Richard E. Farwell, increased speed to 20 knots and commenced circling in a tight ring to the right.

"I figured if the planes were enemy, that would be my best maneuver," said Farwell. "Well, they were enemy, and as soon as they came within range we opened up with our three-inch and 20mm. I don't think we scored any hits as our three-inch bursts were between the planes and the ship and the Japs were out of 20mm range.

"The twin-engined Jap planes commenced a very wide sweep in a clockwise direction to the right. About six minutes later we observed MAHAN firing and also saw her get hit by suicide bombers. At the same time we spotted a formation of enemy bombers directly over MAHAN and many enemy fighter planes. Just a minute later our P-38s, their silver fuselages sparkling in the sun, and our shark-nosed P-40s, were really mixing it up with the Japs. I noticed one P-40 come up from beneath the bomber formation and pick off a twin-engined job in one swoop. The remnants of the formation which attacked MAHAN plus some newly arrived enemy planes continued to the right and headed toward us. My guns were all set to fire, but there were so many of our Army fighters weaving around the Japs that I hesitated to open up for fear of hitting our planes. During this period a total of five enemy planes crashed into the sea after being hit by Army fighters.

"I held fire until I noticed three enemy bombers wing over and go into a 45-degree dive toward us. We gave them everything we had. We had quit circling and were fishtailing when the lead bomber leveled off and pointed toward our bridge. There was a large explosion and a huge orange sheet of flame enveloped the amidship section of the ship as the plane struck just above the waterline, parts of it passing completely through the ship. An instant later another bomber passed low over the forecastle, strafing as it came in, and crashed in the sea about 200 yards off the starboard bow. Still another crashed into the sea astern, missing by about 600 yards."

Could WARD or MAHAN be saved? Could any of the ships be saved in Ormoc Bay? How many planes did the Japs intend to expend in one morning? All these questions were flashing through the minds of the officers and men who had put the troops ashore and were hastening to begin the perilous trip back to the other side of Leyte.

The destroyer WALKER (Commander George F. Davis) stood over to the injured MAHAN to lend a hand, while the O'BRIEN and the minesweeper SAUNTER eased over to help the flaming WARD.

4

By one of those strange coincidences of war the commanding officer of O'BRIEN was Commander William W. Outerbridge. On December 7, 1941, he, as a lieutenant and skipper of WARD, had fired the first shot of the Pacific War in the sinking of a Japanese midget submarine which was attempting to enter Pearl Harbor.¹ Now exactly three years later to the day he was standing by his old ship trying to save her life.

It couldn't be anything but a losing fight. Ammunition, cooked off by the flames, was popping in all directions, and the Kamikazes were still thick overhead. So orders were given on WARD to abandon ship, and the two rescue ships were then told to stand clear.

Outerbridge reluctantly complied. But still he refused to give up hope and a little later obtained permission to go back alongside the flaming, smoking, exploding WARD. It was a gallant, and a sentimental try. Nothing could be done.

Finally Admiral Struble stepped in and ordered O'BRIEN to sink WARD by gunfire.

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume I, *Pearl Harbor to Coral Sea*.

The gunnery officer on O'BRIEN, Lieutenant Paul B. Smith, knew exactly where to aim for he had once served on a ship of the same class.

With a lump in his throat Outerbridge gave the order: "Fire!"

The first salvos dug into the after magazine and WARD exploded, spouting steel high into the air. The veteran 4-stacker who had drawn first blood of all in World War II went down in pieces under 119 fathoms of water.

By this time, too, MAHAN's life had been ended by torpedoes from WALKER.

Less the two destroyers sunk, the convoy formed up for its return trip back to San Pedro Bay. Four landing ships, unable to pull away from the beach, were also left behind to become mute but constant targets for attacking planes all that afternoon.

One of these ships was the LSM 318. Her skipper, Lieutenant Percy W. Rairden, was already a survivor of one sinking when the escort carrier LISCOMBE BAY was lost during the invasion of the Gilberts. That afternoon the 318 was smashed by a suicider while stuck on the beach and had to be abandoned.

"Jap planes were falling like rockets all over the place," said Rairden. "Falling isn't really correct because they were coming in under full power to pile into our ships."

Rairden and his men spent the next two days ashore with the Army. Rairden said that, aside from picking centipedes out of his shirt pockets in the middle of the night, he had nothing to worry about except the mud and infiltrating Jap snipers. Army life has less excitement and more annoyances than with the Navy, and while it's just as dangerous, the board and lodging isn't as good.

5

Before the destroyers could reach their screening positions, the convoy was again under heavy suicide attack. The P-38s were flying hard and fighting well but they could not stop the rain of suiciders. Nothing could have.

One Zeke went into a tight spin and commenced a suicide crash on the destroyer HUGHES, Admiral Struble's flagship. The HUGHES sprinkled the air with AA, knocking the plane into the water about 50 yards from the ship. A second Zeke dived on the destroyer transport COFFER and was

BATTLE REPORT

exploded 500 yards astern. Zeke number three came in low and fast on the LDDLE, another destroyer transport. It was exploded a bare 30 feet from the ship and fragments showered its intended victim.

The LDDLE's luck did not hold. Another Zeke came in from dead ahead and crashed the bridge, killing the skipper, Lieutenant Commander Lloyd C. Brogger; the executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Sylvester Cunningham; the gunnery officer, Lieutenant Thomas E. McAlpine, Jr.; the medical officer, Lieutenant (jg) Jerome W. Greenbaum; the communications officer, Lieutenant (jg) Joseph A. Murphy, and almost all the personnel in the bridge area.

The ship was kept under control by the quick thinking of Lieutenant (jg) Frederick H. Stunt, who ran back to after steering and maneuvered the ship by hand signals from Ensign Burton H. Behrens, who was perched on top of the tripod mast.

All afternoon, while the convoy headed south toward Surigao Strait, the attacks continued. The destroyer LAMSON was hit and was saved only through the fine work of the rescue tug ATR 31. The LST 737, too, was hit. Many more were narrowly missed. The destroyer FLUSSER shot so much that she ran out of ammunition.

Only after the sky darkened and the convoy was well into the Mindanao Sea did the attacks cease. It had been one of the most intense air attacks of the war, lasting for nine and a half hours, and the greatest Kamikaze effort yet. About a hundred enemy planes, a third of them Kamikazes, had attacked; forty-eight had been destroyed, counting the suicide crashes that had taken so heavy a toll of American lives and ships.

CHAPTER EIGHT

... To Victory

I

THE JAPANESE, even during the dying days of the Leyte campaign, still had plenty of fight left in them. They always had plenty of fighting spirit, however foolishly they spent it.

On the evening of December 6, as the battle-weary Ormoc convoy headed up the west coast of Leyte, it was warned that large numbers of Japanese aircraft were over the island. Then the radio reported that a large formation of transport planes, supported by fighters and bombers, had dropped an estimated 250 paratroopers on the San Pablo, Buri, and Bayug airstrips. Buri was in the hands of the counterattackers for hours. When the Japanese were dislodged, little damage was found to have been worked on the installations. In fact, not much harm could have been done to the still-incomplete strips, and work had already been stopped on both the Buri and Bayug strips due to the heavy rains.

In concert with the paratroop attack, ground troops fought their way out of the mountains and effected a brief juncture with the airborne forces. From captured documents and prisoners of war it was learned that the Thirty-fifth Japanese Army, the highest tactical unit on Leyte, had planned to attack on a major scale in co-ordination with the 1st Parachute Regiment, but the Japanese forces on the east side of the mountain range were so weakened that their best offensive effort came to nothing.

The Japanese made two more attempts to send sizable convoys into Leyte. They got the troops in, but not half their ships out again.

The Japanese convoy that was reported heading south the day of the Ormoc landing detoured into San Isidro harbor on the extreme north-western tip of the island. There twenty-one Marine Corsairs, part of Marine Air Group 12 that had recently moved into jammed Tacloban, found them weighing anchor after they had disembarked two or three thousand troops. Attacking with gun, rocket, and bomb from masthead height, the fighter-bombers damaged or sunk all seven of the ships.

Four days later, on December 11, the Japanese tried again. This time they succeeded in putting their troops ashore at Palompon, south of San Isidro, before they were detected. Again they paid a price, for the same Marine Corsairs twice attacked their 10-ship convoy through heavy anti-aircraft fire, sinking one cargo ship and beaching two. That night the PT 490 (Lieutenant (jg) John M. McElfresh) and the PT 492 (Lieutenant (jg) Melvin W. Haines) caught the Japanese destroyer *UZUKI* close to the shore being unloaded by barges, and sank her with a spread of torpedoes.

2

Meanwhile the 77th Division had driven north against heavy opposition and had entered Ormoc Town on December 10.

The first resupply convoy was scheduled to arrive at Ormoc one hour before midnight, on the same day that the Japanese were attempting to resupply their troops to the west at Palompon. The convoy consisted of thirteen landing ships (LSMs and LCIs) screened by six destroyers: *REID* (Commander Samuel A. McCornock), *CONYNGHAM* (Commander Brown Taylor), *SMITH* (Commander Frank B. List), *CALDWELL* (Commander George Wendelburg), *COGHLAN* (Commander Benjamin B. Cheatham), and *EDWARDS* (Lieutenant Commander Simon E. Ramey).

Shortly before sunset, as the convoy approached Ormoc, a dozen Japanese planes approached from dead ahead flying low over the water. The *REID* opened fire while they were still five miles away and knocked two out of the sky. This must have provoked the Japanese, for they started giving *REID* the works.

One plane screeched in and crashed about 500 yards off the starboard beam. A second hooked its wing on the starboard whaleboat and then swung into the side of the ship at the waterline. One *REID* gunner was knocked down by the upper half of the Jap pilot's body that was hurled through the air by the explosion. A third plane came up the starboard side strafing, grazed the bow, and then crashed off to port. A fourth came up the port side strafing and leaking gasoline, and crashed to starboard. The fifth and last plane came in from dead astern and found its mark. It crashed one of the after guns and exploded the magazines.

It was all over in about 15 seconds.

The *REID* was heading for the convoy at 30 knots. As her magazines

exploded she lurched to port, then immediately came back heavily to starboard. Back and forth, port to starboard, each swing describing a wider arc; and yet her screws drove her through the water until one last lurch dipped her starboard scuppers into the sea and she slid along the water flat on her side before sinking. Survivors were strung out for three hundred yards astern.

That night the convoy arrived at Ormoc. Landing craft from our ships heading in toward the beach loaded with supplies were taken under heavy fire by Japanese guns which still rimmed the area. A huge enemy searchlight illuminated our ships from the hills, but it performed at least as much good as harm by disclosing a number of Japanese barges sneaking along the coast. They were quickly obliterated.

On the way out the next morning the empty ships were again attacked by Kamikazes, about thirty of them. Only the destroyer CALDWELL was hit, however, and although brutally mauled she was able to proceed under her own power.

3

The end of the Leyte campaign was now only a matter of time. Control of the inner air and waters of the Visayas was now shifting to the Americans. The Japanese, by heroic efforts, had managed to replace their heavy plane losses by ferrying aircraft down through the Nansei Shoto-Formosa chain and by using their few aircraft carriers as transports. But it was a losing battle. The impossible requests of the Japanese commanders in the Philippines could no longer be met.

On the 21st of December the 1st Cavalry Division pushing south in Ormoc Valley met the 77th Division pushing north. The core of organized Jap resistance had been broken. Then on Christmas Day a reinforced battalion of the 77th made an unopposed landing at Palompon to the west. It was the climax. The next day MacArthur declared that all organized resistance had ended.

That the fighting on Leyte had been the toughest in the South and Southwest Pacific since Guadalcanal is attested to by the casualty figures. Over 56,000 Japanese lay dead. Only 389 had been captured. American Army dead were slightly over 3,000, wounded near 10,000.

Control of the ground combat units now passed from the Sixth Army to the Eighth Army and before Leyte was completely cleared six months later over 24,000 more Japs had been killed.

General Yamashita had not wanted to make Leyte the decisive battleground of the Philippines. He had wanted to fight only a delaying action there while building up his strength on Luzon for the main event. But he was overruled.

"Orders came from the Grand Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo and from Field Marshal Hisaichi Terauchi, Commander of the Southern Area Army," related Major General Yoshiharu Tomochika, Chief of Staff of the Japanese Thirty-fifth Army, "that the decisive battle of the Philippines would be fought on Leyte, because the maximum strength of the Japanese air force could thereby be concentrated in repelling the American landing. Likewise the maximum strength of the Combined Japanese Fleet could be hurled against the American forces attacking Leyte. Yamashita was disappointed but followed orders . . . It is my opinion that Yamashita's original plan was the correct and wiser one. In this way the final conquest of the Philippines could have been delayed six months or longer . . ."

The decision made, huge quantities of troops and supplies were poured in—and lost.

"Our loss of supply and troop transports in the Leyte operations was very great," said Major General Nishimura, who, at the time, was serving on Yamashita's staff. "We lost 19 of the 25 transports that had been allotted to us by Imperial Headquarters. On these ships we lost our very best equipment. When a troop transport was sunk, the men could usually swim ashore, but they did not bring their equipment with them; so all we got was more men . . . Yes, our finest equipment was lost at Leyte. That cost us the Philippines . . ."

CHAPTER NINE

The Flying Carpet

I

IN THE THIRD FLEET both ships and men needed rest. The men needed a change, any change, from the grind, the monotony, the strain of constant combat. Fighting with hardly a break since before the invasion of Leyte, they had grown a little less alert, and had become a little heavy-handed. But it was nothing that a few liberties on the island of Mog-Mog wouldn't cure!

Mog-Mog, largest island in Ulithi atoll, had been turned into a recreation ground. A number of softball diamonds had been marked off in the sandy soil and nearby was a beer-drinking area. The natives had been moved to another island, but they had left behind a number of palm-thatched huts—actually just thatched roofs supported by pillars and open on all sides. The largest of these was converted into a club where great numbers of weary fliers found relaxation. "The island of Mog-Mog is only two feet high," said one flier, "so no one could hurt himself."

Some amused themselves by wandering about the island idly picking up bright seashells along the beaches or visiting the only indigenously interesting spot on the island—a native cemetery. Others went swimming in the clear, warm water.

The hot sun gave beer the potency of Martinis, and the earth-floored bar (one end for beer drinkers and the other end for two-fisted types) was by far the most popular place on Mog-Mog.

Outside, under the sparse shade of a coconut palm, crowds continually milled about the rough, bare boards of the dice table.

When island-closing time (5:30 P.M.) rolled around, the hot swarming crowd shifted to the single jetty where small boats were waiting to take them back to their ships for the evening alert and the nightly movie. For a while it was first come, first served, in getting into the boats, but eventually the congestion of the boats and passengers became so great that

a beachmaster had to be assigned to the jetty to keep the nightly exodus in order!

But all was not intense relaxation. Work had to be done.

The INTREPID, ESSEX, HANCOCK, and CABOT had all been hit by suiciders on the eventful November 25 and needed patching up. All the ships needed stores and the inevitable spare parts. Most of the ships had routine repairs to tend to—from minor adjustments of radar tuning to major work on main engines.

All the repair and servicing facilities at Ulithi were afloat; there were none of the usual repair shops and warehouses generally associated with a fleet base. Instead, service ships at anchor in the big lagoon—Commodore Worrall R. Carter's Service Squadron 10—performed these functions. There were stores ships, repair ships, destroyer tenders, hospital ships, floating machine shops, refrigerator ships, floating dry docks—everything, a fluctuating total of about 250 auxiliary vessels. Anything could be repaired, from the heaviest turbine to the finest optical instrument. Small boats with working parties aboard shuttled back and forth all day long from their parent ships to these service ships. "The supply units," wrote Halsey, "worked around the clock to replenish and refit the fleet units."

When the heavy rains continued to retard the completion of the airfields on Leyte, MacArthur advised Halsey that he would need his fast carriers to support the Mindoro invasion.

The Third Fleet had just sortied from Ulithi on December 1 when word was received that the Mindoro invasion had been postponed ten days, till December 15. This was unexpected and welcomed. The fleet immediately did a "turn 18" and filed back into Ulithi.

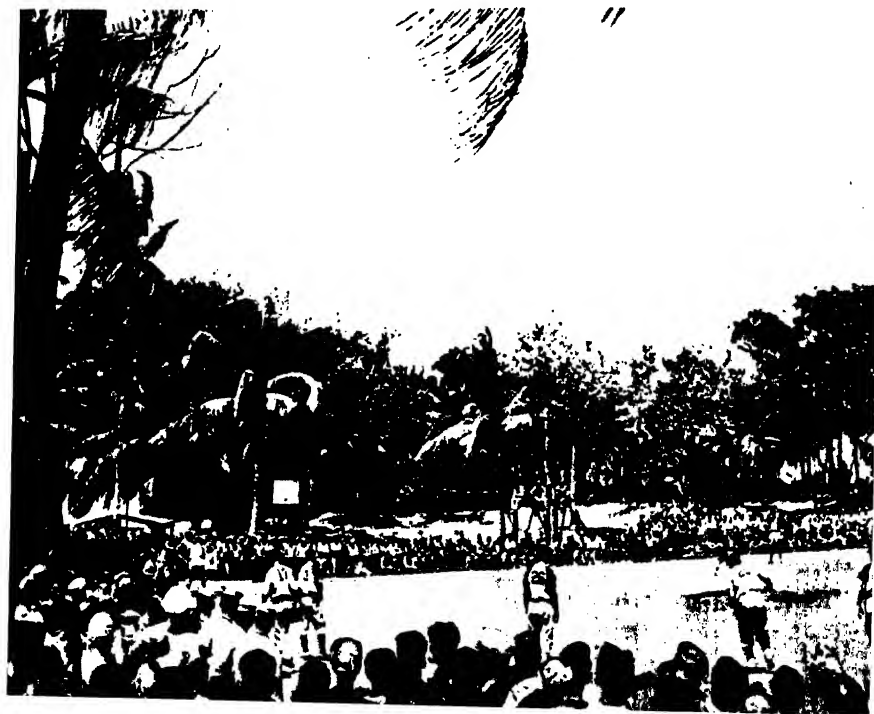
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Ten days later a much-refreshed Third Fleet was at sea again. The mission of the fleet, now streamlined into three task groups, was to keep the Japanese aircraft on Luzon from launching attacks against the Mindoro invasion force during three vital days—December 14, 15, and 16—covering the approach, landing, and unloading stages.

"From Leyte to Mindoro," explains "Mick" Carney, "was a long hop with no intermediate airfields under American control. If fighter support or fighter umbrella could not be provided, and it was virtually impossible



PLATE 1—Lineup and batting order for today's game—and tomorrow's! "Murderer's Row" the fleet nicknamed this photograph (*above*) of six Essex-class carriers, riding at anchor in Uliathi atoll, Caroline Islands, the Navy's springboard for the final campaigns of the war. Here ships damaged by Japanese suicide planes were patched up, and here over-strained crews found relaxation on Mog Mog (*below*) largest island of the atoll. Fans as rabid as any Brooklynites cheer big league stars, then in the Navy, as the Third Fleet team defeats the Fifth Fleet, 7 to 4, on March 7, 1945.



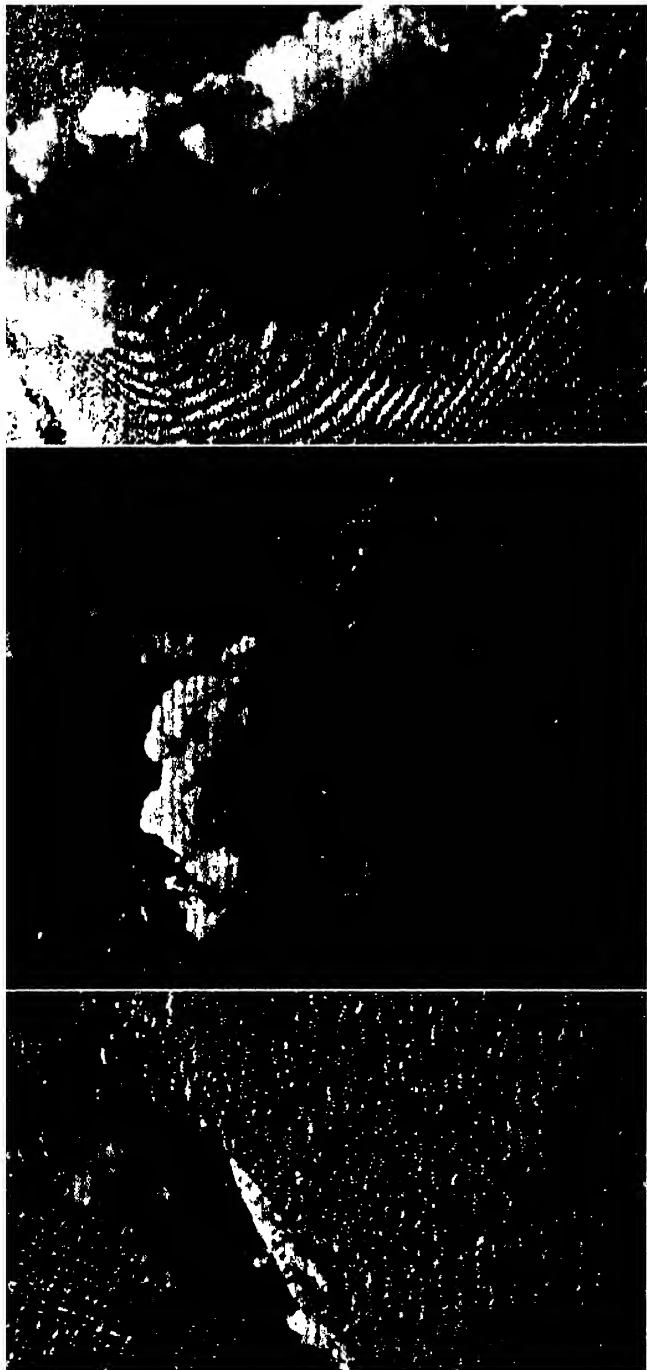


PLATE II—Japanese warships which fled to Manila Bay, after defeat in the Battle for Leyte Gulf, soon were followed by Navy carrier planes. This dramatic series of pictures shows what happened when Navy torpedo and bombing planes from the USS *Essex*, USS *Ticonderoga*, and USS *Lexington*, for Vice Admiral Sherman's Fast Carrier Task Force, cornered several enemy capital ships. The planes took off from a point 160 miles east of Manila, November 5, 1944. (*above left*) The enemy's heavy cruiser *Nachi* lies dead in the water, an explosion tearing out her starboard side amidships. (*above center*) Dense smoke obscures a direct hit from a Curtiss Helldiver on another Japanese ship. The surrounding surface of the bay is pockmarked with debris splashes. (*above right*) While a Japanese destroyer circles the *Nachi*, smoke and steam pour from the fatally stricken cruiser.

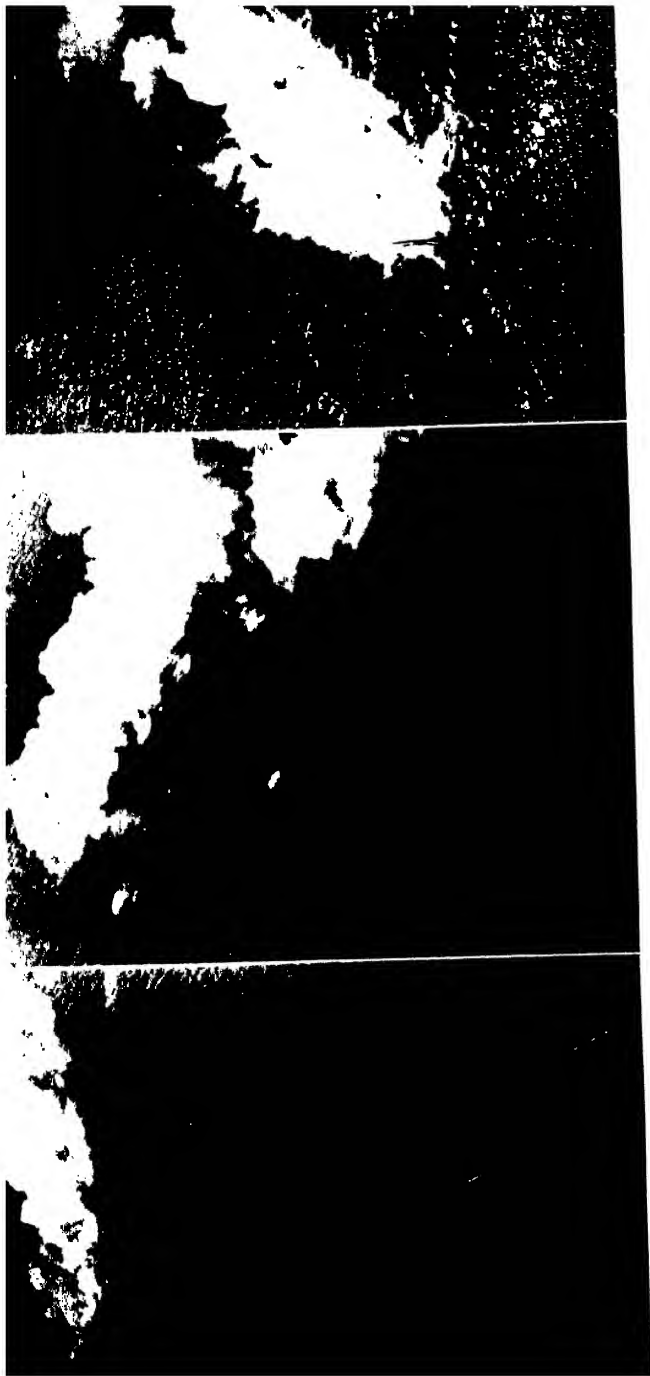


PLATE III.—Death throes of the NACHI. Because the Japanese heavy cruiser tried to escape from the bay, she was given "preferential treatment" by Sherman's flyers. Reports indicate she took 9 torpedoes, 16 bombs and 16 rockets before breaking into three pieces. She was either a very stout ship or observers did some wishful reporting. However, all agree she was sunk! (*above left*) White scratches at center and lower right are wakes of U.S. Navy torpedoes, streaking unerringly for the fleeing Japanese cruiser. (*above center*) Bullseye! All three torpedoes smash home, but smoke and flame of explosions hide the damage done. (*above right*) With bow shot away, hull broken abaft the stacks and flaming, the doomed NACHI settles to the bottom of Manila Bay. Later, American divers recovered important top-secret papers from the NACHI's safe.



PLATE IV—"Black 13th" for Japanese at Manila. Quickly following up their successful raid of November 5, Navy carrier planes hit the water front of the Philippine capital on November 13, sinking the light cruiser *Kiso*, 4 destroyers, 3 tankers, and several cargo ships.

(upper) Almost all the Japanese vessels seen in this photograph are, or soon will be, resting on the muddy bottom of Manila Bay—out of the war.

(center) This 2,000-pound Navy bomb seems to be headed for the heart of Manila, but it hit the dock area, wreaking havoc among enemy shipping and supply dumps.

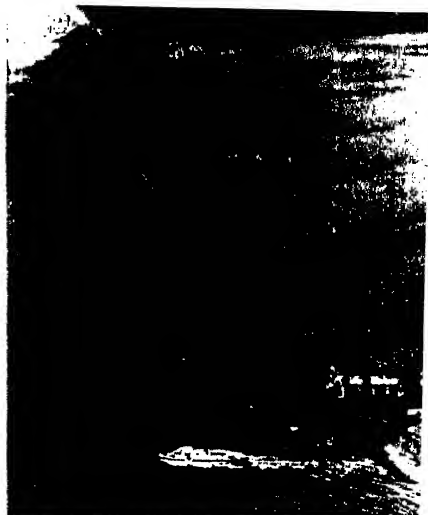
(lower) Resembling a Kansas tornado, a doomsday pall of smoke hangs over Manila during the Navy carrier-based bomber strike of November 13, 1944. Much smoke came from burning tankers, whose loss meant further strangulation of both Japanese military operations and industry.

PLATE V—While heavy rains retarded the completion of Army Air Force's essential fields on Leyte, the Navy's carrier planes struck again and again against Jap-held Philippine air bases and Japanese shipping.

(upper) The vessel below the Navy Helldiver is Japanese, but it is being given a wide berth because it is a hospital ship. Port Silanguin, smoking in the background, did not get off so easily.

(center) A wildly-maneuvering Japanese cruiser weaves a fantastic water pattern, as it attempts to escape Navy carrier bombers in Manila Bay. It was later sunk.

(lower) Geyser-like columns of water, from near hits, silhouette a Japanese heavy cruiser during the Navy carrier-based plane attack on Manila Bay, November 5, 1944. Soon after this picture was taken several of the bombs struck home, and the cruiser sank stern first.





(upper) The carrier's Chaplain stands on the wing of the plane rendering last rites to the airman, whose body remains at his post of duty.

(center) As a bugler blows taps, and the officers and men of the ESSEX stand at attention, the torpedo plane and its gallant occupant drop over the fantail into the sea.

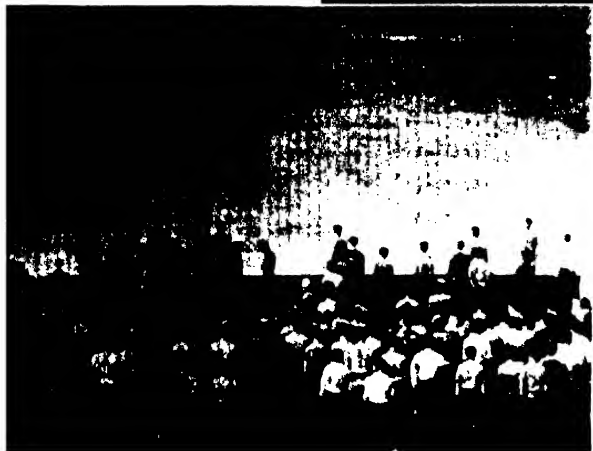
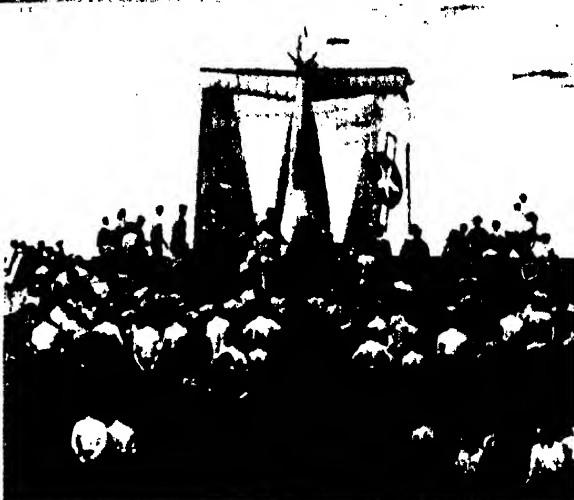
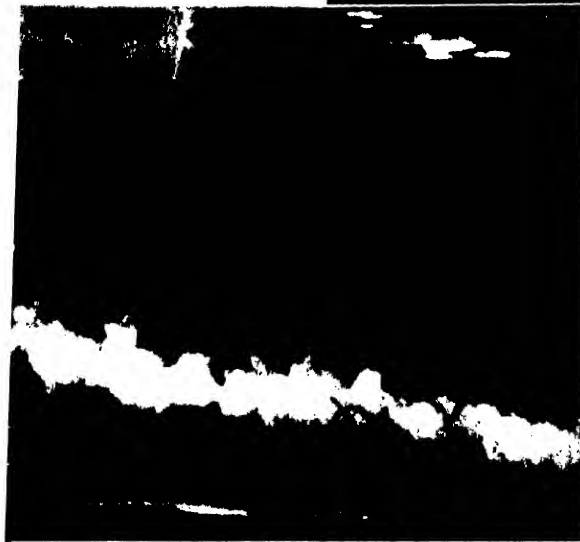


PLATE VI—One of the most impressive burials of World War II took place aboard the USS ESSEX, November 6, 1944, following Third Fleet air strikes against Manila. A Navy Avenger, while blasting the Japanese, was hit by an antiaircraft shell which exploded in the turret, killing the gunner. The badly damaged plane after being skillfully landed aboard the carrier required immediate disposition. Both plane and gunner were ordered committed to the deep.

(lower) With bowed heads, the solemn crew remain motionless for some time, their eyes following the remains of the slow-sinking plane as it carries the body of their shipmate to his final resting place.

PLATE VII—upper The MARYLAND takes one on the chin, but comes back fighting. A huge sheet of flame roars from the port side of the venerable battleship, as a Japanese Kamikaze smashes into her, November 29, 1944. MARYLAND, damaged first at Pearl Harbor, took another Kamikaze off Okinawa, but she was still going strong at war's end.



(center) When the Japanese tried to reinforce their Leyte island garrison in November 1944, more than 300 Hellcats, Avengers, and Helldivers from the Third Fleet intercepted the convoy near Ormoc Bay: 4 transports, 4 destroyers and 1 destroyer escort were sunk; 8 Navy planes were downed. The twisting smoke trail of one of the U.S. planes can be seen, upper left.

(lower) Vainly, Japanese escorts attempt to lay a protecting smoke screen around the enemy troop transports. One of them, apparently an ammunition ship, explodes violently, upper left. Of the 25 enemy planes protecting the convoy, 18 were shot down.





PLATE VIII—No wonder Japanese statisticians considered the INTREPID a ghost! Four times the rugged vessel survived Nip attacks, making her the most frequently-hit carrier in the U.S. Navy. These scenes followed the third attack, November 25, 1944, when two Kamikazes rocketed into her flight deck, to turn the big ship into a blazing, gasoline-fed inferno.

(upper) Repair parties work feverishly to clear the wreckage and restore the INTREPID's flight deck to operations. Here a shipfitter burns away buckled steel.



(center) For two and a half hours the courageous crew battled fires in the interior of the ship. In the foreground an alert fire-fighter points out a still smoldering corner.



(lower) While fire-fighting crews labored below, the INTREPID's wounded were given first aid on the flight deck. Many lives were saved by the prompt application of artificial respiration.

PLATE IX—Jungle warfare may look picturesque, but it is no fun. Slogging through dense thickets, a Yankee patrol crosses a crude log bridge on Leyte island. Eyes and rifles were constantly alert for Japanese snipers, lurking in the underbrush and in the tops of palms.

(upper) This picture explains why a second landing on Leyte, at Ormoc, facilitated the conquest of the heavily-overgrown island.

(center) Navy runs interference for Army. In a daring move, Navy LSMs (Landing Ships, Medium) land Army troops near Ormoc, behind the Japanese lines, December 7, 1944—third anniversary of "the day that will live in infamy." The maneuver broke the Jap hold on Leyte.

(lower) What would you do if you were out fishing, and you suddenly found yourself in the midst of a battle? A common predicament of the Filipinos is vividly depicted in this water color of the Ormoc Bay struggle between Japanese planes and U.S. Navy warships. (By Lt. Comdr. Dwight C. Shepler, Official Navy Combat Artist.)

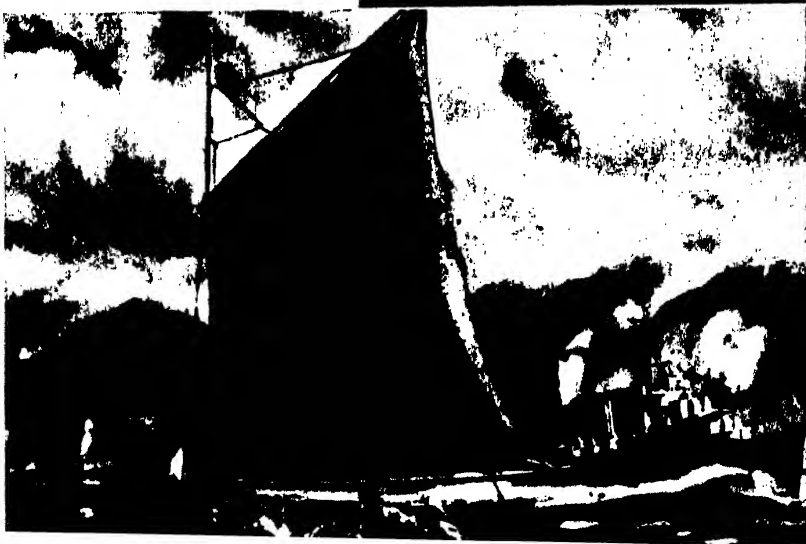




PLATE X—The Japanese had planned to land troops at Ormoc on the same day as the Americans—only they didn't get there first! (*upper*) This is what happened to one of the enemy destroyers intercepted off the west coast of Leyte by U.S. planes supporting the American landing. (*below*) Another view of the Jap convoy caught en route by U.S. planes. At the right smoke billows from a Japanese destroyer and a freighter transport.



PLATE XIII—Friend or foe? Anxious eyes of an antiaircraft crew aboard a cruiser, covering the Mindoro landing, try to identify a plane far overhead. Note the flashburn clothing worn by the gunners.

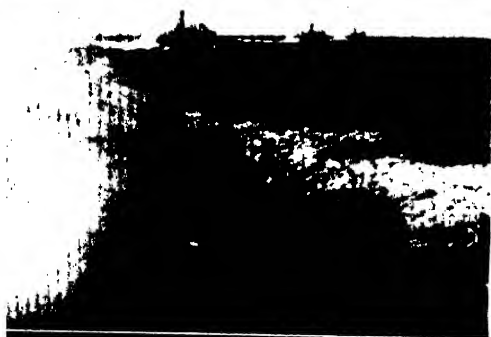
(center) This rubbish heap is all that remains of a Kamikaze and his plane, which struck the NASHVILLE during an early stage of the Mindoro operation. Flaming gasoline enveloped a third of the cruiser.

(lower) Marine gunners aboard the NASHVILLE were killed when a wing of the Jap suicide plane clipped the 20mm guns (right) hurtling the plane into the superstructure just aft of the bridge, where it exploded. More than 300 casualties resulted, 135 of whom died. A shipmate (lower center) views the bodies of some of the Marines who died at their posts.





PLATE XIV—War is not always grim. Sometimes it offers moments of startling beauty, such as this peaceful early-morning scene. A PT boat, returning from a night patrol, frames a graceful Filipino sailboat and a palm-fringed Leyte cove between its 20mm guns.



(center) Contrast the placid vista above with this roaring "company front" of PTs. They are returning from a "Christmas present" raid on the Japs, December 25, 1944, when the mosquito boats ably supported the amphibious landing above Ormoc.

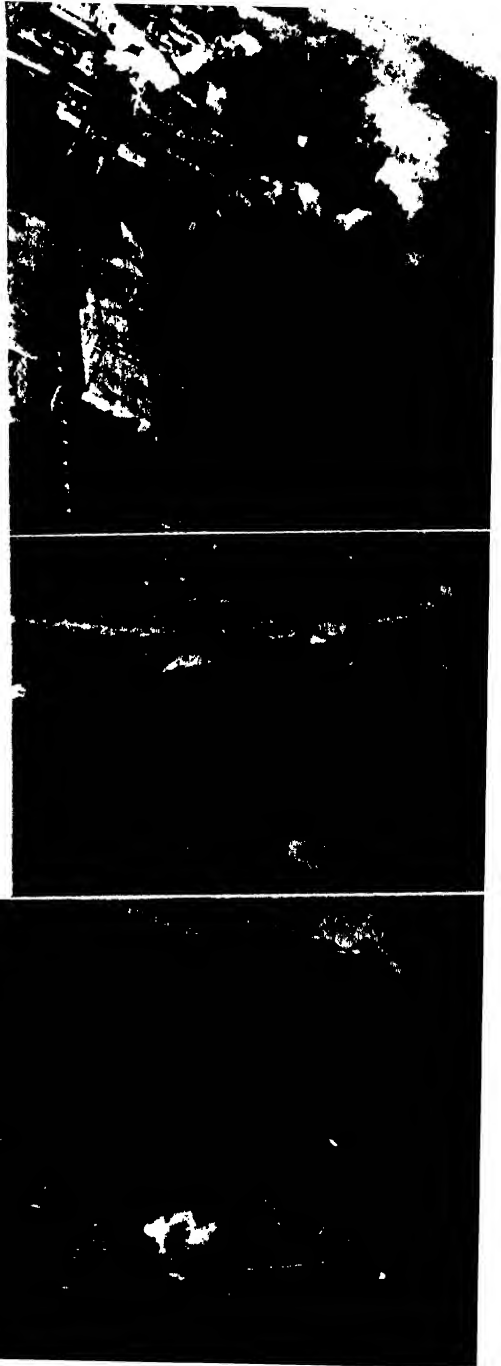


(lower) Flying, carrier-based leather-necks. Members of the first Marine fighter units to be assigned to a Navy flat-top are briefed in a carrier ready room. The lecture is on Formosa, Luzon and other islands they have not seen, and are soon to attack. Lack of attention might later be fatal, hence the wrapt interest!

PLATE XV—Luzon. Indo-China, Hong Kong—the Japanese were learning how many places American lightning could strike at once. (*upper*) Raids like this, on small railroad junctions in Luzon, did not make headlines, but they were necessary preludes to a successful invasion of the main island of the Philippines. Here Army Fifth Air Force planes pin-point a target in southern Luzon. (*Army Air Force Photo.*)

(*center*) Caught like sitting ducks near the entrance of Quinhon Harbor, French Indo-China, two Japanese ships are attacked by Navy planes from the Third Fleet. In a series of raids up and down the Indo-China coast in mid-January 1945, carrier plane pilots sank 40 ships and destroyed more than 100 planes.

(*lower*) Hong Kong proved a tough nut to crack. Planes from Vice Admiral John S. McCain's Task Force 38 fought well, but Japanese antiaircraft was "intense to unbelievable." For the first time in many months U.S. plane losses exceeded those of the enemy—61 U.S. to 47 Japanese. Canton and Hainan Island were also raided on this mid-January operation.



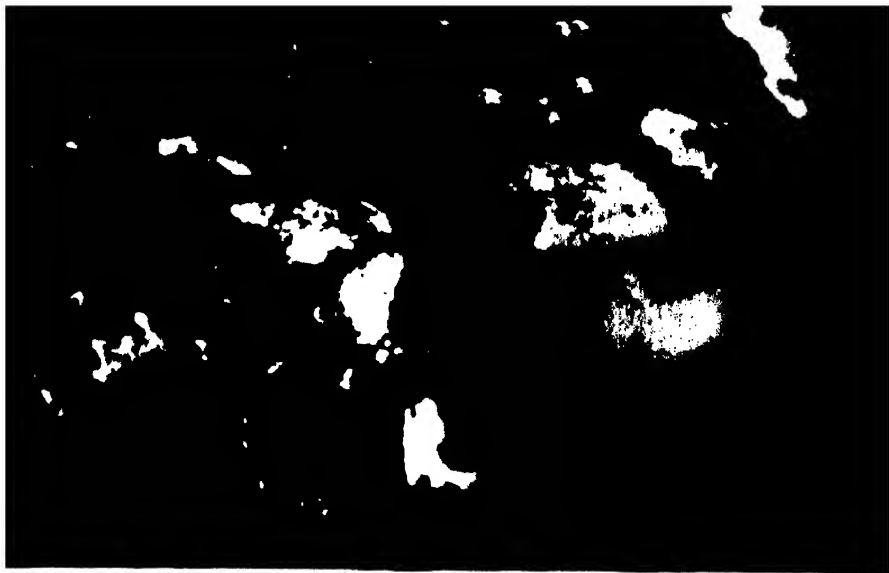


PLATE XVI—Formosa fantasia. (*above*) Like some rare oriental flower, this bizarre eruption of smoke and flame, grew from the explosion of a Japanese naval transport, victim of a Navy carrier-based bomber in Takao harbor, Formosa, January 15, 1945. When the smoke and steam cleared away nothing but debris remained on the water. (*below*) A smile covers the emotions of Captain Dixie Kiefer (*left*) as he leaves his ship, the USS TICONDEROGA, with his executive officer, Commander W. O. Burch, Jr. (*right*) The two suffered shrapnel wounds when a Japanese suicider hit the carrier off Formosa, January 21, 1945. Despite painful injuries Captain Kiefer remained on the bridge of his ship for twelve hours.



to do so from Leyte, then it was necessary to completely suppress the enemy air power in Luzon during the critical periods of those landings. At this time something new in the technique of carrier operations was used. . . ."

The new technique was the putting of a day and night "air blanket" over all the Luzon fields and not allowing a single Jap to leave home base. There were some hundred-odd Jap airfields on Luzon, so it would be quite a job for Slew McCain's thirteen carriers (seven regular and six light). The fields were allotted by area among the three task groups and then further divided among the carriers themselves.

The primary mission of Task Force 38 was "to neutralize enemy Luzon air strength which might interfere with the Mindoro landings." So the destruction of enemy aircraft ranked first in target priority. Second came installations such as fuel tanks, gas trucks, and stowage facilities whose destruction would immediately interfere with Jap air operations. Third down the list came enemy shipping—what there was left of it.

To assist in concealing the target date of the Mindoro support operation the antiaircraft cruiser *SAN JUAN* was sent north from Ulithi into the Philippine Sea with orders to transmit urgent dummy messages, thus creating the impression that the carrier task force was about to strike. Further to confuse the Japanese monitors, deceptive radio traffic was maintained through the Ulithi facilities—communications ships anchored in the lagoon—when the Third Fleet finally put to sea.

In the early morning of December 14 the carriers reached the initial launching point, about 200 miles northeast of Manila, somewhat north of the spot from which the November strikes were launched.

"On the initial strikes," relates Admiral Carney, "a certain amount of enemy air rose to meet the challenge and was shot down. The boys looked the fields over and destroyed what they could on the ground. Then they took photographs. Experience from the November strikes had shown that with enemy camouflage, and with his practice of widely dispersing planes near shrubbery and trees, the area within five miles of each airfield had to be thoroughly covered. The returning first strike turned in its photographs and by the time the third strike was off, the photographs had been inspected and it was found that large numbers of planes, which were not visible to the naked eye of a fast-moving pilot, had been carefully hidden. The succeeding strikes were briefed, went in, and cleaned those up.

"At night we maintained night fighters over the enemy airfields and

every time one of the so-and-sos tried to move, he was shot down. The night fighters would go in and turn on their lights like the Japanese do. They would be accommodated by having landing lights turned on the field, whereupon they'd strafe.

"For three days the enemy air was completely flattened in one of the most amazing operations of the war. They attempted to organize a counterattack of Kamikaze boys on the third day and eight planes managed to get off the ground and rendezvous prior to proceeding toward our forces. They were shot down over the east coast of Luzon, 100 per cent, and no attack was made against the carrier force and no snooper ever succeeded in seeing us and getting off his radio report.

"It was a brilliant operation and the technique of the fighter sweep and blanket, originated by Admiral McCain and his staff, proved to be a new and invaluable tactic when dealing primarily with enemy air for a short period."

The Japanese had not been able to lift "even one corner of the blanket" and the Mindoro landing force, as well as the Fast Carrier Task Force, had not been attacked by a single aircraft flown from Luzon. For the most part, the Jap could not even get off the ground. Sixty-four of his aircraft were destroyed in the air while three times that number were destroyed on the ground.

One of the most spectacular interceptions of the operation occurred when TICONDEROGA fighters were making their last sweep of the day on the 14th. Twenty-seven Jap fighters were encountered near Vigan, in northern Luzon, probably flying in from Formosa. In the following melee eighteen of the Japs were shot down while the TICONDEROGA planes "did not receive so much as a bullet hole in return."

3

Not one Navy plane was lost as a result of air combat with a Jap. Half of the fifty-four planes lost by Task Force 38 were knocked down by antiaircraft fire over the target area—mostly near Clark, Nielson, and Nichols fields.

Japanese Vice Admiral Shigeru Fukudome, Commander of the Second Air Fleet on Luzon, had managed until the middle of December to keep up his air strength to the original 600 or 700 planes by flying replacements down from the empire. But the plane is no better than its

pilot, and the Japanese pilots lacked the training necessary to stand against the fliers attached to Task Force 38.

It must have been frustrating, indeed, for the Japanese not to be able to move in or out of their fields, day or night, without fear of being shot down. Not only did the Americans clamp an air patrol on their heads all day and not only did "hecklers," usually from INDEPENDENCE, intrude all night, but the usual gap between the time the last strike of the day departed and the first night hecklers arrived was closed with "zippers"—night fighters who, using day fighter tactics, proceeded to the target in daylight in time to relieve the last day blanket patrol.

By the evening of the 16th of December Task Force 38 was ready to lift its blanket—or "flying carpet," as it might have been more appropriately called—and retire to the eastward for a fueling rendezvous with the tanker group.

"After the third day of suppressive operations over Luzon," relates Admiral Carney, "the Fast Carrier Task Forces withdrew to refuel with the intent of returning on the 19th to renew the attacks against Luzon air. There had been prior agreement with General MacArthur that if such renewal were necessary it would be undertaken, but only if specially requested. Apparently General MacArthur felt that there might be a resurgence of enemy air activity due to reinforcement or to planes which had escaped destruction in the first days' operations, so we were called back.

"That necessitated fueling in a geographic area which physically permitted our return within the required time. And here enemy weather sat in on the game and dealt us an unfortunate hand. There were indications of a tropical disturbance of some sort to the east of us, and there were predictions made by the weather centrals and by the aerologists in the fleet, all indicating that the logical path of such disturbance would be a recurving toward the north and northeast, thereby not seriously affecting the operating area. . . ."

But already the seas began to roughen and the sky took on a heavy leaden color.

On the bridge of a destroyer an old quartermaster looked up at the sky and sniffed.

"The skipper'll have a rough time fueling this bouncing bucket tomorrow," he said to the striker standing by his side.

CHAPTER TEN

The Wind That Swept the Fleet

I

SINCE MAN FIRST STARTED going to sea, he has feared one thing above all—a storm. In the ancient days of galley and sail a storm was looked upon as the elemental violence of an angry god, and the best protection against it was thought to be an appropriate offering or sacrifice. (Hence “poop deck” from the Latin *pupa*, an image—image of the deity carried on board in a miniature shrine.)

Storms have played an important part in the history of sea warfare: the Greeks won a resounding victory over the Persians in 492 B.C. after a storm broke up the Persian fleet off the dangerous promontory of Mount Athos; what was left of the Spanish Armada after its defeat by Drake was destroyed by a storm off the coast of Ireland; the Japanese homeland had been saved from invasion in 1281 when a “divine wind” destroyed the powerful Mongol fleet of the conqueror Kublai Khan.

With the coming of steel and steam, the sailor’s fear of storms diminished to a great extent—perhaps too much. The average sailor felt snug and secure in the belly of the modern warship, surrounded as he was by all the conveniences of an American city. He felt he could go anywhere and do anything he pleased, so long as he fed the oil-thirsty engines. It might be uncomfortable at times when the sea kicked up, but nothing more than that. He felt, indeed, as if he were master of the elements.

But the average sailor had never known the full fury of a typhoon.

2

Fueling day for the Third Fleet, December 17, dawned gray and choppy. The overcast sky gave no promise of a break, and the sea continued to grow more restless. Sometimes only the masts of nearby ships would be visible as they dipped deep into the valleys between the swells. To the men aboard the ships it seemed as if a dull leaden bell had been

clamped over the sea and a huge invisible hand was stirring the waters.

"The seas were rough," Admiral Carney continues, "and there was some wind but nothing as heavy as had been experienced before, nor was the weather as heavy as that in which we had successfully fueled on previous occasions. However, the wind and sea were across each other and the actual fueling was extremely difficult. Some of the ships were unable to hang on; they parted hose lines; they drifted away; they got no fuel.

"And then it suddenly became apparent that this tropical disturbance was intensifying and that it was moving to the west and not to the northeast as we had hoped and expected. The situation was a difficult one not only from the standpoint of seamanship but from the standpoint of military commitment, and until the last minute every effort was made to refuel these ships so that they might meet a commitment which could involve the loss of many American lives in Mindoro if we went down."

Captain Jasper T. Acuff's service group, Task Group 30.8, rendezvoused with the Third Fleet about 1000 that morning. Acuff's 27 destroyers, 7 escort carriers, and 24 fleet oilers were split into three sections, corresponding to the three carrier task groups of the Third Fleet. In this way the entire fleet was kept in contact with appropriate service groups at the same time, thus shaving down the fueling time to the absolute minimum—usually one day, with good weather conditions. During fueling operations the escort carriers, carrying fresh planes and pilots, would move in to a convenient position and fly off the replacements to fill the gaps on the combatant carriers.

The whole beautiful pattern, perfected by practice, was literally blown apart December 17.

Throughout the morning many attempts were made to fuel the destroyers but, in the words of the official report, with "indifferent success." The SWENSON and STEPHEN POTTER, screening destroyers for Bogan's carrier group (TG 38.2), both parted their lines while attempting to fuel from the oilers. The SPENCE attempted to fuel from NEW JERSEY, which was carrying Halsey and his staff, but was unsuccessful. The HULL, a destroyer with the tank group, had mail for thirty ships of the Third Fleet, and while the fleet destroyers were fueling, she moved in to play the part of a welcomed courier. Only with much difficulty was she able to get forty bags of the SOUTH DAKOTA's mail aboard the battleship. That was all—tragically all.

3

Although many of the destroyers were critically short of fuel, the Third Fleet had to give in to the elements. Halsey ordered all fueling operations suspended at 1:30 in the afternoon. A "tropical disturbance" was reported to the southeast, so a new fueling rendezvous for the next morning was selected to the westward.

The destroyers SPENCE, HICKOX, and MADDOX, bunkers all dangerously low, were ordered to remain with the tanker group instead of rejoining their fast carrier group. Until darkness set in, SPENCE attempted to take on oil from one of the four tankers, but it was impossible with the heavy seas and hammering wind.

If anyone slept that night it was with an arm around a stanchion and a foot on the deck. The wind remained steady from the northeast at about 40 knots. Heavy rain fell periodically through the night and the sea continued to grow rougher and more confused. Great sheets of spray covered the pounding destroyers as they wallowed in a world of water and darkness.

Well, men and ships have lived through worse, and the expectation was that next day would be better. But worry was piled on discomfort. The storm did not curve north as expected. It seemed to follow close on the path of the fleeing ships, like a hound on the scent.

Three times during the night the fueling rendezvous was changed in an attempt to sidestep the circling storm. Constantly maneuvering, each ship had its own problem of trying to keep station. It was a wild night full of discomfort and confusion. It was a night when every officer of the deck, every captain, thanked God, and the electronic technicians, for radar, because with the help of that cat-eyed instrument some semblance of order could be kept in the formation—and it was of prime importance to keep formation if the fleet was to fuel the next morning.

After midnight the barometer remained steady. The next morning dawned dull and gray with the sky heavily overcast. The sea continued to heave and roll, and the wind blasted the tops of the waves into a foamy spray like froth blown from an overfull beer glass. An attempt was made to fuel the most critically short destroyers, but it was no use. The wind was picking up constantly and shifting to the north. The barometer started to drop. At eight o'clock it read 29.43 on ALTAMAHA, an escort carrier. The typhoon (for it was clear now that it was a typhoon) came

wisting across the Philippine Sea considerably south of its estimated track, pinning the northernmost units of the fleet in their path.

When it was realized that fueling was impossible and was going to remain impossible, the fleet was brought about to a southerly course. With sterns to the wind, the ships ran before the storm.

Aboard HULL, which was now screening a tanker group, was Lieutenant Commander James A. Marks. The HULL was his first command.

4

"At a time I estimate roughly about 1130," Marks remembers, "the seas became mountainous and the wind increased to hurricane proportions. Considerable damage was occurring as the sea grew worse. The motor whaleboat was smashed in at the bow and finally was torn clear of the boat davits, falling into the sea. Several depth charges were ripped loose from the K guns and were lost overboard. All the charges were set on safe, so no damage was done by them. The smokestacks were under a terrific strain because of the wind—several of the metal covers of ammunition ready boxes were ripped completely off the boxes by the wind. The bridge structure itself was under such great strain that I was greatly concerned that the structure itself might be torn off the ship. No man could have possibly existed in an exposed position topside without having been quickly blown overboard.

"In endeavoring to alleviate the heavy rolling of the ship, I tried every possible combination of rudder and engines, with little avail. An attempt was made to bring the ship's head into the sea but she would not respond. Then an attempt was made to turn away from the wind and bring it as far on the port quarter as possible, but again the ship would not answer. It was apparent that no matter what was done with the rudder and engines the ship was being blown bodily before the wind and sea, yawing between headings of 100 and 080 . . .

"By this time, because of high-velocity wind gusts, the ship took several rolls of about 70 degrees. At one time the Junior Officer of the Deck was catapulted from the port side of the pilothouse through the air to the upper portion of the starboard side of the pilot house . . .

"Shortly after twelve o'clock the ship withstood what I estimated to be the worst punishment any storm could offer. She had rolled about 70 degrees and righted herself just as soon as the wind gust reduced a bit. I

have served in destroyers in some of the worst storms in the North Atlantic and believed that no wind could be worse than that I had just witnessed."

And then it got worse.

"The wind velocity increased to an unbelievable high point which I estimated at 110 knots. The force laid the ship steadily over on her starboard side and held her down in the water until the seas came flowing into the pilothouse itself. The ship remained over on her starboard side at an angle of 80 degrees or more as the water flooded into her upper structures. I remained on the port wing of the bridge until the water flooded up to me, and I stepped off into the water as the ship rolled over on her way down. I felt the suction of the hull, but it was not very strong. Shortly after I felt the concussion of the boilers exploding underwater. The effect was not very strong and caused me no ill effects. I concentrated my efforts thereafter on trying to keep alive. I could see only a few feet while in the water. The sea was whipped to a froth and the air was full of spray—I felt just like a pea in a pot of boiling water, being thrown up and down underneath the surface, being smashed by the heavy waves. . . ."

And that's what became of thousands of letters from home.

5

The HULL was not the first to go down fighting under an onslaught more powerful than even the atomic bomb.

The SPENCE, low on fuel, had been riding very poorly over the huge waves and mountainous swells. By eleven o'clock so much water had seeped into the engine and fire rooms that in one lurch a miniature tidal wave doused the engines. All power was immediately lost. Lights went out throughout the ship and men groped blindly while the whole world seemed to crash about their heads. The helpless ship, unable to move, was caught in the trough of a huge swell. She rolled over 75 degrees—

But she righted herself slowly, and for a minute it seemed as if she would survive. Then another wave broke over her decks, rolled her over on her side. She continued on over, trapping all those below decks—in the jumbled, blacked-out passageways, in the paper-strewn radio room, in the wrecked wardroom, in staterooms tangled with books, clothes, sheets, and chairs. Only the men topside on watch managed to get off the ship. They clutched life rafts, floater nets, floating debris—anything they

could grab before being blown out of sight. No one saw the ship sink. She was last seen floating upside down.

Still a third ship had fallen victim to the inhuman vengeance of the storm—the destroyer *MONAGHAN*. Joseph C. McCrane, Watertender 2/c, senior survivor of the sinking, tells the story:

“I climbed out of my sack that morning at about 0630 and went topside to find that the storm was worse than any of us had realized. The sea was so rough and the wind so strong that it was next to impossible to walk topside. Being Oil King I went up to the machine shop to fill out the morning fuel and water reports with my assistant, Leonard Bryand, Watertender 3/c. The previous day some of the machinists’ mates had been painting the machine shop and had left their paint cans standing around half full. When we opened the door there was paint from one end of the place to the other. It was so thick on the floor that we had all we could do to stand up. The stock that they use on the lathe had broken loose during the night and it was sliding all over the shop. We tried to secure it but it was impossible. We went forward to sound the fuel tanks and found that we had between 129,000 and 130,000 gallons of fuel. Chow was down by the time we finished, so we went to the mess hall and it was such a ‘mess’ down there that it was impossible to eat. There was food all over the deck and those who were eating were standing up holding onto something with one hand and trying to eat with the other. One look at the place convinced us that we weren’t hungry so we went topside again to try to make our way back to the engineers’ compartments.

“About 1030 I received word from the bridge to pump ballast into the two empty fuel tanks we had aft. Leonard and I went down to the shaft alley, which is right below the forward engineers’ compartment. When we reached it we saw that most of the spare part boxes were broken loose from their racks and there were five 50-gallon drums of lubricating oil on the gratings that were also loose and sliding around. The valves we had to open for pumping ballast into the tanks were under the gratings and it was impossible for us to move the spare part boxes and oil drums without help. I called up to the engineers’ compartment for some help and William Hally, Watertender 1/c, and Roland Fisher, Watertender 2/c, came down to give us a hand. We finally managed to get the valves opened.

“We went back to the engineers’ compartment and I went right on to the steering motor room, which is in the aft part of the ship, and called the

engine room and told them to start pumping ballast into the two empty tanks aft. By this time the ship was rolling pretty hard. I went back to the engineers' compartment and the ship was rolling so heavy that all of us decided to go topside into the after gun shelter. At that point we were all just plain scared. At 1130 the lights went out. A few of us ran down to our lockers to get our flashlights and ran back up again. At about that time the storm broke in all its fury. We started to roll heavy to the starboard and everyone was holding onto something and praying as hard as he could.

"I managed to work myself to within about ten feet of the door on the port side. There were about forty men in the shelter. One of the fellows was praying aloud. Every time the ship would take about a 70-degree roll starboard he would cry out 'Please bring her back, dear Lord. Don't let us down now! Bring it back, O God, bring it back.' Soon a few other guys would join in. Then when we came back we'd chant: 'Thanks, dear Lord!'

"We must have taken about seven or eight rolls to the starboard before she went over on her side. When she did go over, some of the fellows tried to get the door open on the port side. It was a difficult job because the wind was holding it and the waves were beating up against it, but they did get it opened and we started out. All the fellows kept their heads and there was no confusion or pushing and everyone was trying to help the other fellow. A gunner's mate by the name of Joe Guio, with absolutely no thought of his own safety, was standing outside of the hatch pulling everyone out. I was about the tenth one out. As soon as I was standing on the side of the ship I started to blow my life jacket up. I was so nervous that I was barely able to do it. The waves were breaking over steadily and were carrying the fellows right off. Some of the men who had been knocked into the sea or who had jumped as soon as we heeled were being pounded into a pulp against the side of the ship.

"Finally a wave came along and knocked me off. When I landed in the water I lost all sense of direction and I was trying to beat my way to the surface. I felt as though I was in a whirlpool. Men were knocking up against me and as I started to the surface I could feel men grabbing at me. When I reached the surface a swell took me up and placed me right on the side of the torpedo tubes. I tried to climb up to the highest point of the ship which, at the time, was the side of the 20mm shield. I just about reached it when another wave took me and wrapped me around

the antenna. It must have spun me around four times before it threw me loose and out into the sea again.

"The next thing I knew I was in the water trying to keep from being pounded against the side of the ship. Water and oil were blowing against my face. I was choking and beating the water like a puppy trying to stay on the surface, when I suddenly realized that I had better slow down or my strength wouldn't last very long. It was impossible to keep from swallowing the salt water and oil. I tried to look around me to see if I could see the ship or any of the crew but it was impossible as the visibility was almost zero.

"It seemed as though I was out there for an eternity before I heard Joe Guio yell that there was a raft right in back of me. I swung around and grabbed on to it and thanked God that it came when it did. The raft was crowded and all of us were exhausted. Every once in a while the wind and waves would toss our raft over and some of the men would be knocked off but we always managed to get them back on it. After about five or six hours the rain ceased and the wind died down considerably.

"There were thirteen of us hanging on the outside of the raft, two seriously wounded. We didn't know how many the raft would hold as it was in a pretty shaky condition so we let the wounded climb aboard first and then the rest of us followed one by one until we were all aboard. We were afraid that the bottom might fall out of the raft so we crouched down in the water so that our life jackets would take some of the weight. We started to organize ourselves then to find out who was hurt and how much food, water, flares, and medical supplies we had. We found that we had two kegs of water, assorted cans of emergency rations in a large can, and a five-inch powder can of medical supplies. We had no flares or water markers and only one oar. It seems that everything had been broken loose by the storm."

Another destroyer, the DEWEY, was not lost but she came dangerously close to being. Her commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Charles R. Calhoun, in describing the terrible day wrote: "The fierce wind which was raging against us by this time (1130) was such as no one on board had ever experienced before! The spray, driven horizontally across the surface, blotted out the sea from the sight of those of us on the bridge, and felt like a barrage of thousands of needles against the face and hands. It was impossible to stand against the gale without bracing against the ship's structure. The needlelike spray removed the paint from metal sur-

faces in many places like a sand blaster. No one had a stitch of dry clothing (nor had we had for hours) and we were in constant danger of falling overboard into the sea almost every time the ship rolled to starboard. By this time (1210) our roll had increased to a consistent 65 degrees, and several officers personally witnessed the inclinometer needle bang against the stop at 73 degrees, hang there for several seconds—while the ship continued to roll—and then after a breathless eternity, roll back. Competent engine-room personnel, including the chief machinist's mate, later reported that the engine-room inclinometer also rested against its stop (about 75 degrees) on two or three occasions.

"The barometer was still going down—until it finally went completely off the scale, and still kept going!

"It was inconceivable that the ship could continue to 'take it.' On several occasions the starboard (lee) wing of the bridge dipped under and scooped up solid green water! None of us had ever heard of a ship righting herself from such a roll—but this one did!

"The storm continued to grow even worse, and at about 1230, the number one stack pulled out from its mooring at the top of the uptake (boat deck level), and fell across the ship, finally hanging limp, completely flattened, over the starboard side of the maindeck. This also carried away our whaleboat (which had been scooping up water on every roll), and the forward boat davit. Apparently this loss of stack, boat, and davit was a good thing. Almost immediately there was a perceptible change for the better in the way the ship rode.

"Loss of the stack had several serious disadvantages, however. It caused several flarebacks in #1 fireroom (burning away the under-drawers of one man almost completely), and permitted additional opening to the sea. Also, the steam line to the whistle and siren carried away, and we vented previous boiler pressure steam to the atmosphere for many minutes before it was possible to shut it off.

"The engineers on watch remained faithfully at their posts, and by their combined efforts in maintaining boiler pressure and operating the pumps, they performed the real work of keeping the ship afloat!

"At about 1300 the barometer reached its lowest point (27.3 estimated, since it was lower than the scale), and at 1340 showed its first slight rise. We had passed the center of the storm!"

Through the whole fleet the fight against the storm continued. With each ship the fight was a personal affair, to be fought and won—or lost—

by each individual ship. There could be no outside aid. The fleet as a team had ceased to exist and each ship was on its own, faced with a stark fight for survival.

6

Even the larger ships were feeling the full weight of the elements. The escort carrier *ALTAMAHA*, running before the storm, yawed, rolled heavily, and was in danger of being pooped by the following sea. Speed was increased hoping that steering would be made less difficult. This resulted in long surfing runs down the swells with tremendous rolls at the end when the ship was brought to a slight pause in the trough. The cycle would then start again when the next swell picked up the carrier like a giant surfboard and pushed it forward on an angle with its bow lower than its stern. Once again in the valley between the mountainous swells, the ship would roll heavily, groaning at every seam, and the men topside could look *up* at the sea.

Many ships began reporting fires caused by shorted wiring and shifting planes. Serious fires on the light carrier *MONTEREY* broke out when a fighter plane on the hangar deck broke loose from its moorings, crashed into a plane on the port side, and exploded.

The light carrier *SAN JACINTO* also had its troubles:

"About this vessel, the storm appeared to reach its greatest intensity at about 1030. At that hour the shock of the heavy seas on our starboard quarter, the excessive rolling (maximum roll 42 degrees), and the pitching of the ship, tore loose the heavily reinforced mooring lines, wires and deck padeyes of a fighter plane on the hangar deck. It smashed into other aircraft likewise moored, and tore them loose, ripping out the deck eyebolts in many instances. Spare engines, propellers, tractors, and other heavy equipment were all scrambled into the violently sliding mass, and smashed from side to side, ripping open and carrying away the unprotected flimsy air intakes and ventilation ducts. Repair parties and volunteers tried valiantly to secure the ungovernable and destructive heavy pieces item by item, and finally succeeded at about 1600, but not before a series of small electrical and oil fires had broken out. These fires were small, quickly extinguished, and did no damage. Much water from the sea, and from fire fighting, cascaded into the lower deck spaces through the badly damaged air intakes and air supply ducts on the hangar deck to add to the toll of the damage."

7

The storm gradually began to subside in the afternoon. The main body of the fleet had escaped the center of the storm by steaming south, but the northernmost fueling group had been heavily hit.

Reports of damage started to flow in: guns inoperative, radars and electrical circuits shorted out, decks buckled, masts carried away, boilers flooded out, radio antennas carried away, boats destroyed, planes damaged, leaks in hull, plating cracked, stacks damaged, evaporators and pumps out, power lost, gyros out, life rafts and floater nets lost overboard, fires. Among the ships reporting damage were: the light carriers MONTEREY, whose damage necessitated her return to Pearl Harbor for extensive repairs, COWPENS, CABOT, SAN JACINTO; the escort carriers CAPE ESPERANCE, NEHENTA BAY, and ALTAMAHA; the destroyers DYSON, BUCHANAN, HICKOX, DEWEY, AYLWIN—besides the three sunk; the destroyer escorts TABBERER and M. R. NAWMAN; the light cruiser MIAMI; and the fleet oiler NATAHALA. A total of 146 airplanes were lost, including eight blown overboard from the battleships and eleven from the cruisers. The ALTAMAHA alone had 44 plane casualties either lost or damaged beyond repair.

The extent of the damage was indicated in Admiral Nimitz's report in which he said that the damage done by the typhoon "represented a more crippling blow to the Third Fleet than it might be expected to suffer in anything less than a major action." Divine wind, indeed!

By the next morning, December 19, the seas had calmed enough so that the battered fleet could accomplish its long-delayed fueling and at the same time take inventory of the damage. Many of the smaller ships were dangerously low on fuel. The destroyer LONGSHAW, for example, had only 2,000 gallons in her tanks—the equivalent of half a gallon in an automobile. Halsey had already notified MacArthur and Nimitz that the strikes scheduled for the 19th could not be carried out, and now he notified them that he would be unable to strike Luzon before the 21st at dawn, but he planned to strike then. In the meantime searches went on for the survivors of the capsized destroyers.

8

McCrane continues the story of the small knot of MONAGHAN survivors left clinging to their raft in the churning, wind-tossed sea:

"Darkness had completely settled over us and the rain had stopped and the wind had died down considerably. The waves were breaking over us continuously and everyone was very cold and felt very miserable. We found that the only two that were seriously wounded was Joe Guio, Gunner's Mate 2/c, the guy who had probably saved my life by yelling about the raft, and Dan Holland, Ship's Cook 1/c. Guio had a large piece of the bottom of his foot hanging off and Holland had a large gash on the top of his head and a hole in his shins. It was impossible for us to give them any medical treatment as it was so dark we couldn't distinguish one thing from the other.

"We then decided that we might as well try to settle down for the night and pray that we would be picked up in the morning. Guio didn't have any clothes on so I pulled him in close to me and put my arms around him to try and keep him as warm as possible. He kept complaining that the water he had drunk made him sick. We then sighted two ships with their searchlights on and we knew that they were searching for survivors but they were so far away that they never even saw us. Guio awoke and asked me if I could see anything and when I told him I could see the stars he said that he couldn't see anything at all. He then thanked Melroy Morrison, Seaman 2/c, for pulling him aboard the raft and then he thanked me for trying to keep him warm. He laid his head back on my shoulder and went to sleep. About a half hour later I had a funny feeling come over me and I tried to wake him up only to find that he was dead.

"We all said the Lord's Prayer as he was lowered over the side.

"At daybreak the first thing we decided to do was ration the food and water. The Spam and the malted milk tablets were very good tasting, but the biscuits were so hard that it was impossible to eat them. We had to soak them in the sea before we could bite into them. We were in shark-infested waters and were completely surrounded by them. We were plenty scared of them too. Every time we opened a can of Spam more sharks would appear.

"Doil Carpenter, Seaman 1/c, and I broke out the first-aid equipment and dressed the wounds of the injured fellows. It seemed as though our efforts were fruitless because as fast as we treated a leg wound it had to be put back into the salt water. We sighted some planes but they seemed to be going everywhere but where we were. Everyone was so on edge and our bodies were so sore that if we even brushed against each other it was painful. We had a difficult time with one seaman 1/c who insisted upon

drinking salt water. We slapped him and threatened to throw him to the sharks but it was all in vain.

"We lost one of our water kegs that day as the lashing didn't hold it to the bottom of the raft. Toward evening some of the boys began to crack under the strain. One fellow insisted upon biting the shoulder of another fellow. They did such things as untying the life jackets that we tied on the outside of the raft as they were too water-soaked for us to wear during the day. They unscrewed the top to our first-aid supply can and consequently we lost almost all of our medical supplies. That night Dayton Genest, Gunner's Mate 2/c, and Bruce Campbell, Seaman 1/c, passed away and we had two more burials. We still don't know what they died from but we think that Campbell died from drinking salt water.

"On the morning of the 20th we sighted another raft and decided that we would try to reach it. We paddled with our hands and with the one oar we had. The swells were still so high that it seemed impossible to ever reach that other raft. We could only see it when it was on top of a big swell. When we finally reached it we found that it was a float-type raft and there was no one on it. We couldn't get any closer than ten feet to it so Morrison and Louis Shalkowski, Fireman 1/c, swam over to the other raft and tried to push it toward us and we tried to row to them. The currents kept us apart and the distance between us kept getting greater and they finally disappeared from our sight. They were never seen again.

"We saw some more planes in the distance but they always seemed to be flying away from us. We sighted a task force that day too but it was too far away.

"Our raft was in pretty bad condition at this point, and Doil Carpenter and I repaired it as best we could. We brought up the bottom so our bodies would be that much farther out of the water. The conversation was usually turned toward home and all the water and homemade cooking we were going to enjoy if we ever came through. Holland was getting worse all the time and I gave him a shot of morphine but it didn't seem to do him any good at all.

"That night most of the fellows had really lost their heads, they thought they saw land and houses. One radioman 2/c jumped overboard and kept swimming around us. We tried to get him back in but he just ignored us. He finally climbed back on the raft and told us that he had just filled the water keg with fresh water while we were dozing. I had Doil

Carpenter examine the keg to see whether he had dumped that water or if he had put salt water into it. Carpenter said that it was almost all gone. We started arguing with the guy and he told us that if we didn't leave him alone he would whistle and have us surrounded by Indians. I told him to go ahead and whistle and he did. We waited awhile and I asked him where his Indians were and he said, 'Don't worry, they'll be here.'

"One of the other fellows had a white bandage tied around his head and this radioman kept asking, with all seriousness, how the girl got into the raft. One of the other fellows thought he saw a beach with a big red schoolhouse on it. When he told me I asked him if it was the one with the big blue blinds. He said, 'Yeh, yeh, that's it.'

"The crazed radioman had been swimming around the raft again and he said that he was going for a short swim and he would be right back. We tried to grab him but he pulled away from us. The water was calmer than it had been at any other time. He would go about eight feet from the raft and then swim back. He did this a number of times, when finally he swam right out of our sight. Suddenly we heard him yell and we tried to row toward the sound of his voice but his voice kept shifting and we couldn't determine from what direction it was coming. It finally stopped and we don't know whether he was attacked by a shark or if he drowned. After all this excitement we turned to find that Holland had died. We had our fourth and final burial at sea.

"On the morning of the third day the sea started to get choppy again and we sighted more planes and a big task force and prayed like we never prayed before that they would see us as we were all in very bad condition. We saw a large onion floating about 25 feet from us and we tried to get to it. We almost had it when a shark about eight feet long had the same idea, so we decided to let him have it.

"James Story, Watertender 3/c, and Robert Darden, Machinist's Mate 2/c, saw a small piece of wood floating near the raft and they picked it up. It was a flat piece of wood with a 1/4-inch chain about eight inches long held on by a nail. We decided to try and make fishing line and catch ourselves a small shark. We had heard that the meat from a shark contained good drinking water. Darden used Spam for bait and finally got a bite, but when he tried to pull it in, the nail straightened out. He tried again and let the line down about 10 inches below the surface of the water. A shark about five feet long came up slowly for it, and as he did, Darden pulled the line in slowly and the shark followed until Darden

had the bait out of the water and the shark had his head right up on the side of our raft. Story took his penknife and plunged it into its head. This frightened it away. William Kramer, Fireman 1/c, and Evans Fenn, Fireman 1/c, were trying to catch some small blue fish with their hands but were unsuccessful. We finally gave the fishing up as a bad job.

"We noticed then that the planes and task force were getting closer to us. We tied a white skivvy shirt on one end of the oar and took turns waving it hoping we could attract some attention. We also used the cans from the Spam and emergency biscuits and tried to reflect them toward the ships and planes. Finally we noticed two planes coming toward us. They went right over the raft about 200 feet above us. We did everything possible to attract their attention but we were almost sure that they didn't see us. Suddenly, after they were well past us, they turned back and made a dive on us. That was when we knew we had been sighted. We were so happy we all said a prayer of thanks. The planes dropped water markers near us and kept circling. Then we saw a destroyer leaving the task force and heading toward us. It was the BROWN. They had a hard time getting us aboard as the water was still pretty rough. They told us when we got aboard that a shark was right on our tails the whole time we were being rescued. Well, he's welcome to the rest of the Spam, anyway."

The area was thoroughly combed for three days, by ship and aircraft. The final total of men rescued included 7 officers and 55 men from HULL, 1 officer and 23 men from SPENCE, and the 6 men from MONAGHAN. The destroyer escort TABBERER, herself demasted by the storm, hauled aboard 55 dripping, exhausted, thankful men.

The 18th of December, 1944, had been a disastrous day. The blind wrath of wind and water, oldest enemy of seafaring men, had claimed 790 victims.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mindoro

I

MINDORO, steppingstone on the road to Manila, was the target the typhoon's divine winds had failed to protect.

Lying just south of Luzon and separated from it by a narrow channel (Verde Island Passage), Mindoro, roughly oval in shape, is about 90 miles long and 50 miles wide, making it slightly larger than Leyte.

MacArthur, however, was not interested in the whole island. All he needed was a toe hold, and a flying toe hold at that. For his purposes just a small area on the southwest coast of the island, centered around the town of San José, was necessary. Here he would build airstrips to support the coming operations against nearby Luzon.

Elaborate precautions had been taken to give the Japanese the impression that Mindoro was of no importance whatsoever to the Allies; that we would hardly deign to take it even if it were offered to us on a lacquer tray. On the other islands of the Philippines guerrillas had organized into effective bands and were regularly supplied with weapons, munitions, and medicines by United States submarines. But on Mindoro the guerrillas were deliberately discouraged and told to lie low and do nothing. A minimum of air strikes was sent against the island. As a result Japanese attention was completely diverted from Mindoro and the garrison forces were gradually reduced to the point where in December, 1944, there were only about a thousand troops distributed in small detachments in the coastal towns. The only reinforcements they received were impromptu and destitute—survivors from sunken ships. At San José, there were only eighty soldiers, all quite bored with their assignment. The Japanese made no attempt to develop air facilities in the area.

One of the queer quirks of Philippine weather is that while it is the rainy season on one side of the archipelago it is the dry season on the other. During November and December, while the northeast monsoons lashed the islands that faced the Pacific, the islands to the west were com-

pletely dry and often quite parched. Thus, while a man sank to his knees in the mud of Leyte, a barefooted native of Mindoro kicked up swirls of dust. While American land-based planes were grounded due to bad weather over eastern Leyte, Japanese planes flying from fields to the west could rise into a clear sky. Too, clear weather prevailed at this season along the convoy route through the Mindanao and Sulu Seas. It all added up to certain trouble for Rear Admiral Arthur D. Struble's Mindoro Attack Force, even though it was a sultry, rainy day on their side of the Philippines as they formed on December 12.

The Attack Force consisted of a transport group under Admiral Struble (1 light cruiser, 12 destroyers, 9 destroyer transports, 30 LSTs, 12 LSMs, 31 LCI(L)s, 16 minesweepers, and other smaller craft), a Close Covering Group under Rear Admiral Russell S. Berkey (3 cruisers and 7 destroyers) and a Motor Torpedo Boat Group under Lieutenant Commander N. Burt Davis, Jr., consisting of 23 PTs.

To give the impression to any prying Japanese that the Attack Force was just another group of ships heading for Manus or Hollandia, Berkey's group headed east while Struble's transport group headed southeast. When darkness fell Struble was in a position to either pass out of the gulf to the eastward or go south through Surigao Strait. Berkey had already entered the Philippine Sea.

There was no moon that night and by 1915—7:15 P.M.—complete darkness had settled over the ships. Seven minutes later Berkey's force reversed course and re-entered Leyte Gulf at high speed. Soon they had taken their position ahead of the transport group now threading its way down Surigao Strait. It was an exciting maneuver, but nothing to the exciting maneuvers to come.

The next morning three separate convoys were strung out in the rippled blue of calm Mindanao Sea. Ahead, in the most westerly position was Heavy Covering and Carrier Group¹ of Rear Admiral Theodore D.

¹ Battleships: WEST VIRGINIA (Capt. Herbert V. Wiley), COLORADO (Capt. Walter S. Macaulay), NEW MEXICO (Capt. Robert W. Fleming): Light cruisers: DENVER (Capt. Albert M. Bledsoe), COLUMBIA (Capt. Maurice E. Curtis), MONTPELIER (Capt. Harry D. Hoffman): Escort carriers: NATOMA BAY (Capt. Albert K. Morehouse), MANILA BAY (Capt. Fitzhugh Lee), MARGUS ISLAND (Capt. Charles F. Greber), KADASHAN BAY (Capt. Robert N. Hunter), SAVO ISLAND (Capt. Clarence E. Elkstrom), OMMANEY BAY (Capt. Howard L. Young): Destroyers: WALLER (Comdr. Harry L. Thompson, Jr.), RENSHAW (Comdr. George H. Cairnes), CONWAY (Capt. Walter L. Dyer), CONY (Comdr. Allen W. Moore), EATON (Comdr. Fritz Gleim), ROBINSON (Comdr. Elonzo B. Grantham), CONNER (Comdr. William E. Kaitner),

Ruddock, Jr., 6 escort carriers, 3 old battleships, 3 light cruisers, and 18 destroyers. Its principal mission was to provide air cover over the convoy once the carriers had transited the confined Mindanao Sea, through which the Army Air Force was providing air security. Ruddock could take a healthy swat at any force that the Japanese might scrape together for a surface raid on the convoy or against the beachhead. For the first time during the war, old battleships and cruisers were operating with escort carriers in a sort of slower, lightweight version of the Fast Carrier Task Force pounding at the Philippines from the east.

Backbone of the main convoy was three rows of LSTs, 10 to a row, flanked by the 31 LCIs and the 12 LSMs. Escorting destroyers and cruisers made a protective horseshoe around the alphabet ships, 23 PTs burbling along at half throttle in the rear. Overhead P-38s and Corsairs patrolled.

The third group snailing along at four knots, was the Slow Tow Convoy, a hodgepodge of tiny craft, tug-towed barges and yard oilers, protected by four screening escorts.

The assault troops of the operation were the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team and the 19th Infantry Regimental Combat Team of the 24th Division, which had been disengaged from the fighting on Leyte for the attack on Mindoro. Originally it had been planned to drop the parachute regiment in an aerial seizure of the Mindoro airstrips, but this had to be cancelled. The Fifth Air Force could not handle such a venture from the boggy, crowded airfields of Leyte. So the paratroopers, clipped of their wings, rode in Navy LCIs.

It had been anticipated by Admirals Struble and Berkey that December 13 would be the critical day of the 480-mile Mindoro voyage. It was feared that as the ships headed west through the Mindanao Sea the Japanese with their snoopers planes or from their lookout points on Mindanao would spot the convoy and launch air attacks.

Aboard all ships breakfast hour was strangely quiet that morning. Most of the men had been at general quarters all night during the passage through the dangerous strait. Nobody felt chatty. That suicide planes could

SIGOURNEY (Lt. Comdr. Fletcher Hale), BENNION (Comdr. Robert H. Holmes), REMY (Comdr. Reid R. Fiala), MERTZ (Comdr. William S. Estabrook, Jr.), MC-
DERMUT (Comdr. Carter B. Jennings), PATTERSON (Lt. Comdr. Walter A. Hering),
HARADEN (Comdr. William H. Watson, Jr.), TWIGGS (Comdr. George Philip, Jr.),
STEMBEL (Comdr. William L. Tagg), RALPH TALBOT (Lt. Comdr. Winston E. Brown),
BRAINE (Comdr. William W. Fitts).

slip in undetected by hedgehopping over the islands at treetop level was common knowledge. All hands fully expected at any minute to receive a death-gust from the Divine Wind.

Struble's flagship, the cruiser NASHVILLE, was a veteran amphibious campaigner, and the feeling aboard her was the same. On the bridge the skipper, Captain Charles Coney, kept his binoculars pointed toward the purple-coated hills searching for sneak planes. If the Philippine advance kept up at its present rate, he thought it wouldn't be long before General MacArthur would ride down Manila's Dewey Boulevard ¹ in a limousine. Perhaps Coney would be beside MacArthur, as the General had promised.

MacArthur was not aboard NASHVILLE this trip. He had chosen to remain at his Tacloban headquarters in close touch with the front lines on Leyte. But the cruiser was none the less a juicy target, for she carried most of the "top brass" of the expedition. Besides Struble and his staff, there was Brigadier General William C. Dunkel, who commanded the Army troops, and his staff. Dunkel, in fact, slept in the same bunk that had once been MacArthur's.

Commander Robert H. Taylor, NASHVILLE's navigator, had gone below that morning for eggs and coffee when he noticed that some of the officers, war-weary and tense from months of combat, were slightly on edge.

"It wouldn't have bothered me," said Commander Taylor, "but I was seated between two of the most noticeably nervous ones.

" 'Yes sir, suicide planes have killed a number of our men,' one officer said as he broke out into a nervous high-pitched laughter. 'Yes, they kill a lot of people,' he repeated.

" 'What the hell is that fellow laughing about?' asked a morose young officer sitting opposite me. 'Does he think it is fun to die?'

"Fortunately I was soon able to quiet the young officer down but the feeling that something was about to happen was in the air."

After breakfast Taylor returned topside to plot the course of the task force and recommend course changes to Admiral Struble as the tactical situation required.

As the day wore on with no enemy planes closing the force, a vague feeling of relief mingled with hope spread through the ship. The men relaxed a little at their battle stations. They talked easier, and laughed

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV.

easier. They relaxed in the favorite topics of sailormen—their girls at home and gripes about the food. It looked as if December 13 would pass quietly after all. A smug feeling of having got away with something began to pervade.

It did not take long for experience-wise Admiral Struble to sense that his ships were apt to become a little less alert. So he strode to the microphone and boomed out a warning to all ships over the TBS (Talk Between Ships) radio: "Attention, all ships! Attention, all ships! The success of this entire expeditionary force depends on the ability of all ships to remain close together in order to throw up concentrated antiaircraft fire. I caution all commanding officers to keep lookouts on the alert in order that ships may open fire on air targets at maximum range."

Here it was three o'clock in the afternoon. The ships were already off the southern tip of Negros, almost entering the Sulu Sea and nothing had happened, not a single Jap bullet, not a single Jap bomb. What the heck is the Old Man worried about?

But the Japanese had a vigilant eye on the convoy. Snooper planes and submarines lurked near enough to plot the convoy's course, but far enough out to evade the destroyers' probing. Japanese coast watchers, peering intently from their jungled posts, reported the progress of the convoy.

Suddenly a black single-engined plane appeared mast high over the convoy. It had come in so low over Negros that neither radar nor lookouts saw it approach. There wasn't time to open fire.

The plane pivoted on a wing tip and then plummeted toward NASHVILLE, screeching death as it came. One of the wings clipped a 20mm gun emplacement and the plane hurtled into the superstructure just aft of the bridge. The deafening explosion shook all the ships steaming nearby. Flaming gasoline blanketed a third of NASHVILLE, and in an instant 325 casualties—a third of the ship's complement—lay strewn about the decks, 135 of them dead.

The blaze ignited ammunition in nearby 5-inch gun mounts, 40mm and 20mm batteries, and the erratic stream of hot lead hampered rescue work and fire fighting. The LAFFEY altered course immediately to go alongside to help, but the 5-inch shells lobbing crazily in her direction prevented.

All radars and radios were knocked out. On the single blinker light that was operational, Struble, uninjured, signaled for Berkey aboard PHOENIX

to take tactical command of the attack force while an assessment of damage to NASHVILLE was made.

Commander Bob Taylor, who had been figuring a course change at the time of the blast, first ran to see if Captain Coney had been killed. Finding the skipper safe, Taylor went below to make a quick evaluation of the damage.

General Duncel, who was resting in his cabin, was painfully burned and wounded. Practically all his staff were killed, including Colonel Bruce C. Hill, his Chief of Staff. Admiral Struble, too, lost his Chief of Staff, Captain Everett W. Abdill. Colonel John T. Murtha, Commanding Officer of the 310th Bombardment Wing, was critically wounded and later died. Struble's staff doctor lived long enough to dictate his will and send a parting message to his wife and children.

One officer who had been near the explosion started to inspect damage in another part of the ship.

Someone asked him if he had been hit: "You look awfully pale."

"No, I'm not hurt," replied the starchy-faced officer, "I'm on my way to inspect damage."

"I think you had better take it easy," counseled the other man.

"I do feel a little dizzy," replied the officer. He groped for support and fell—dead with only two drops of blood on his shirt.

A tiny piece of shrapnel, about the size of a grain of corn, had penetrated his heart.

Of the 41 Marines aboard NASHVILLE, 28 were killed and 10 more seriously wounded. One wounded Marine orderly tried to make his way through a sheet of flame to assist a shipmate whose limp body hung over a searchlight.

"Commander, isn't there some way that I can help that man?" the orderly asked Taylor in a nervous, pleading voice.

"Help will reach him from the other side," replied Taylor. "Besides, if you want to help someone, there are plenty of men lying all around our feet."

"I know, sir," replied the leatherneck in a quivering voice, pointing to the limp body. "But that guy is a Marine!"

Displaying some of the best damage control of the war, Lieutenant Commander Leonard E. Meyer, the first lieutenant, personally led the first fire hose into flames which leapt as high as the foremast. A total of twenty hoses were played on the fire, which was under control within ten minutes and completely extinguished in ten more.

"It seemed too fantastic to be true," said Taylor later, "but both officers who had discussed death at the breakfast table were dead."

Although NASHVILLE could still steam at full power and her main batteries were in perfect shape, she was still badly damaged. All her bridge communications had been knocked out, a third of her personnel were casualties, and her antiaircraft defense was about as potent as a flyswatter. So Struble and the injured General Dunkel, and what was left of their staffs, transferred to Commander Douglas L. Cordiner's destroyer DASHIELL.

Then NASHVILLE, screened by the destroyer STANLY, reversed course and headed back to Leyte Gulf. Gone were Captain Coney's chances of riding with General MacArthur down Dewey Boulevard in a Manila victory parade.

2

As Admiral Berkey put it, "the escort carriers were the honey of the operation and attracted the Jap planes which ordinarily would have gone after the transport convoy."

Actually the first suicide attack did not develop against the Heavy Covering and Carrier Group until shortly before sundown, just after the ships had steamed into the open water of the calm Sulu Sea.

When the attack developed, Stump had tactical command of the force. He, being a carrier man, ran the ships during flight operations and Ruddock then relieved for night operations.

"Bogies, twenty-nine miles, closing from northeast," crackled the radio from Stump's flagship, the CVE NATOMA BAY.

Although jeep carrier pilots "tallyhoed"—the hunting cry used when the enemy was attacked—at 13 miles, 2 of the estimated 15 suiciders broke through to dive on ships. Dirty black blotches of antiaircraft fire and machine-gun tracers flaked the cloudless sky. One plane, riddled by bullets and flaming, plunged harmlessly into the sea. Another, however, jinking and weaving low over the water, crashed into the after part of the destroyer HARADEN's bridge. At the time, the destroyer's skipper, Commander William H. Watson, had his ship in a hard right turn making 25 knots. The hit, besides killing or wounding most of the men in the bridge area and forward fire room, carried away the forward stack, disabled the forward fire and engine rooms, and knocked out all radars and radios. No longer of value to the operation, HARADEN, still capable of

21 knots, was sent back to Leyte Gulf. The destroyer *twiggs* was ordered to escort her as far as Surigao Strait and rejoin the carriers the next morning.

During a late dusk attack several more Jap planes attempted to crash the force, but because of poor visibility and excellent anti-aircraft fire, they failed. One plane, diving on *WEST VIRGINIA*, was exploded in mid-air by gunfire.

"It was a poor start," commented Admiral Ruddock. "We had hoped to catch the Japs with their pants at the dip and wearing weak suspenders, but now they had found us.

"That night I deliberately made a pass at Puerto Princesa with the hope that the Japs would shadow us and estimate that our objective was not Mindoro, but Palawan."

The ruse succeeded. Although the Japanese had early radio intelligence of the path of the attack force, and had sighted its movements into Visayan waters on the 13th, they anticipated that the objective was Puerto Princesa on Palawan, the shoestring island to the west that separated the Sulu Sea from the South China Sea. This belief had been further implanted the day before when Army bombers pestered Palawan with a concentrated attack. Fearing the threat of shore-based air to their thinly stretched China Sea lifeline more than a further advance in the Philippines, the Japs on December 13th brought up more than 150 planes and ordered out from Indo-China ports the remaining cruisers and destroyers of the 2nd Diversion Attack Force.

Ruddock's feint at Palawan, however, resulted in one of the most gruesome of Japanese atrocities in the Philippines. Believing that the convoy was heading for their island, the Japanese at Puerto Princesa herded 150 American soldiers, prisoners of war, into two air-raid tunnels. The prisoners previously had been used as laborers in the construction of airfields. The Japanese then soaked the prisoners with gasoline and set them on fire. The prisoners who attempted to escape were chopped down by machine-gun fire. Four escaped, however, by breaking through the end of the tunnel onto the face of a cliff overlooking the sea. The long drop to the beach below killed one of the survivors of the flames. When the Americans finally occupied Palawan, they found the charred bones of the dead still in the shelters.

The next morning, December 14, U-minus-1 day, was comparatively quiet in contrast to the afternoon before. One big 40-plane raid tried to

get through to the "jeeps" at about 1100 but within five minutes 106 fighter planes were scrambled into the air and only eight Nips managed to come within sighting distance of the force. All were either matted down by AA fire or fell wide of their mark in suicide crashes.

Destroyers screening the carriers also kept vigilant watch, groping underwater with their long fingers of sound, waiting expectantly for the return echo that would reveal a submarine. Many times during the day soundmen were jerked to terse attention by answering "pings"—but always it turned out to be a whale or blackfish. There were so many of them that it seemed the Ancient Order of Seagoing Mammals was staging a convention in the Sulu Sea.

That night, while the transport convoy steamed north toward Mindoro, Admiral Ruddock again steamed toward Puerto Princesa. The next morning Jap snooper planes were scouting the entire area. "By this time they were trying to figure what the hell was going on," said Ruddock.

"I sent a dispatch back to headquarters stating that on U-day I would need all the help from land-based planes that I could get and requested that all possible land-based planes be sent over the Visayan area," continued the Admiral.

"'Impracticable' was the answer.

"I told Stump to have the fighters ready for a predawn launch over all the dangerous airfields and sure enough we caught the enemy at day-break with motors warming up, just ready to take off. Our pilots got all the planes. It undoubtedly made the landing much less costly. At this point we were more surprised than anyone that we hadn't been damaged."

The Japanese, much impressed by the carrier-battleship force in the Sulu Sea, decided not to risk what was left of their surface Navy and ordered the 2nd Diversion Attack Force back to port.

The night before the landing the transport convoy pushed northward toward the Mindoro beaches leaving the carrier-battleship-cruiser group considerably to the south, off the southwestern tip of Panay.

A couple of hours after midnight a Navy patrol plane of the famous Black Cats reported an unidentified something on the surface about fifteen miles from the convoy. Admiral Berkey, who now controlled the covering planes because of the limited communications facilities on the destroyer DASHIELL, Struble's new flagship, carefully checked the positions of the minesweepers ahead of the convoy. None was in the area of the reported contact. He told the Black Cat (PBM) pilot to attack.

At 0305 the pilot reported that he had scored a hit on a cargo transport and that the Jap ship had answered with much return fire.

The unfortunate ship now showed up on the radars of the screening destroyers. The *BARTON* (Commander Edwin B. Dexter) and *INGRAHAM* (Commander John F. Harper) closed for the kill. A flurry of 5-inch shells arched through the night and thirty seconds later the Japanese ship—it was an interisland freighter—was burning so fiercely that miles of sea were brightly illuminated.

3

The San José area of Mindoro is a flat pocket of land surrounded by hills. Stretching for about 33 miles along the southwest coast of the island, the flat alluvial plain extends inland about five miles. The town of San José itself is about four miles from the beaches.

The only means of penetrating the rolling hills and mountains that surround the area to the north and east is by a few native trails. Thus, once ashore, the whole area could be sealed off and a perimeter held without bothering to take the whole island. The Americans wanted only one thing of Mindoro—airfields, and the San José region was a perfect place to build them.

South of San José there was an airstrip that the United States Army had used before the war, but the Japanese had never developed it, no doubt preferring the better facilities at Manila, only 130 miles to the north.

Although San José had been a prosperous sugar-growing community before the war, the area now was badly overgrown, for no crops had been planted in two years.

So it was off the narrow hard beaches of this area that the Mindoro Attack Force drew up early in the morning of December 15. H-hour was originally set for 0720 but it was delayed ten minutes. The fighter planes from the carriers were already weaving overhead.

As the ships hove to, the Filipinos streamed down to the beaches, some herding carabao, some carrying all their household possessions, some carrying babies, and some leaning on canes. Many were waving American flags.

Yet a shore bombardment was a necessary precaution before landing troops. The Japanese, even though they might be few in number, had to

be flushed out. So the destroyers fired a few air bursts to warn the natives to keep clear of the area.

The subsequent ten-minute bombardment did the trick. When the troops started landing, there was no opposition. The few garrisoning Japs had fled to the hills.

The 19th Infantry landed at a point four miles north of Caminawit Point and pressed rapidly inland. One company occupied the point, where a PT base was to be established, and encountered the only opposition of the day. Five Japanese were killed and two captured.

Simultaneously with the landing of the 19th Infantry, the 503rd Parachute Regiment went ashore farther up the coast and by noon had marched into San José. There was no opposition. On the ground, that is.

There was opposition from the sky, however.

A few minutes before 0900, an hour after the carrier planes had been relieved by Army and Marine fliers, and just as the third wave of troops was landing on the shore, a group of planes was sighted to the westward flying low. They were so far away that no one could tell if they were Army Air Force or Japanese. The planes circled to the south and then swung north. For an instant they were lost from view behind Illin Island, which lies off the coast of Mindoro near Caminawit Point.

Then suddenly the planes burst forth over a slight depression in the island, heeled over, and came roaring in at the ships off the beaches.

Captain Henry Polk Lowenstein, Jr., Commander of Naval Advance Base Unit 5 which was to have been established at Mindoro, was aboard LST 472 and describes what happened:

"I was in the wardroom passageway during the heavy part of the action. My first impression that our ship was in a tight spot came from the tremendous amount of gunfire. PTs alongside the LSTs were adding their hefty AA punch. The first plane that crashed close aboard caused a flash and heavy explosion which came through the port watertight door. Seconds later there came a distant crack like lightning striking a tree and the entire ship shuddered and shook. A plane had plunged into the ship just forward of the deckhouse. A very short time later there was a second explosion from deep in the ship; whether it was the tank deck or engine room, I do not know.

"In any event, everybody in the passageway was very shaken up; smoke and fire flew in the doorways and the question was how to get out of the ship. The worst damage seemed forward, so we started aft. One

man resembling a human torch ran by with his clothes on fire down to his waist. A shipmate caught him, knocked him down, and muffed out the flames.

"We had just got to the fantail and had become fairly well organized considering the smoke and fire all around us, when someone yelled, 'Here comes another one strafing.' This plane passed so close that Lieutenant Commander F. O. Olsen, Jr., my executive officer, said he could see the Jap pilot at the stick, and even could see the expression on his face. The plane crashed nearby, but not before its pilot had splattered the fantail with bullets. Out of the 103 officers and men of the crew and 247 officers and men of the Naval Advanced Base Unit, 12 were killed and 50 were hospitalized."

The skipper of LST 738, Lieutenant John T. Barnett, in describing his ship's action said: "As the attack developed we saw two planes coming in low and fast heading for our starboard side. We knew they would crash us because they were too low on the water to miss.

"We took them under fire, of course, and I thought we had both planes smoking, but they kept coming—all this in the space of split seconds. The plane toward the bow of the ship kept dipping lower and lower into the water, and crashed into our starboard side about where our big numerals were.

"The plane went through the outboard bulkhead, through the troop compartments, through the inner bulkhead, directly into the tank deck where we had some 218 drums of high-octane gasoline stored plus 12 tons of 75mm ammunition, and numerous trucks and other equipment, all loaded with high-explosive ammunition for small arms and antiaircraft weapons. We also had two or three hundred flasks of oxygen down there; everything that would make a good fire.

"The first gasoline explosion floored all of us that were on the conn. By the time we got back to our feet, only a matter of seconds, the fire was terrific.

"One billowing explosion followed another. I finally ordered the Army to abandon ship. When I saw that things were getting completely out of control, I called our flotilla commander and received permission to abandon ship. By this time the explosions had ruptured our fuel tanks and the leaking oil had caught fire in patches over the water.

"When most of the men got off the ship, Commander William F. Foster brought his destroyer *MOALE* alongside to try to extinguish the

flames. He was lying off about 50 yards when we had two more terrific explosions causing everything on the deck, car fenders, wheels, cogwheels, to fly through the air. These explosions wounded a number of sailors aboard MOALE and a cogwheel weighing about ten pounds missed Commander Foster's head by about six inches. Several holes were blown in the destroyer's hull, some below her waterline. Since our ship was now beyond saving, Commander Foster backed away from the wreckage."

Nothing could save the two LSTs. Destroyers that came alongside had to pull back, the fires burned so fiercely.

Despite the attack, the first echelon of unloaded ships shoved off for the return trip to Leyte by 1030. A few minutes before General Duncel had gone ashore on a PT boat to take command of his troops.

Sometime earlier that morning a plane had reported a Japanese cruiser aground in Mangarin Bay across from Illin Island. One of the little mine-sweepers at work in the bay was asked to confirm this.

"Yes, there's a Jap ship over here," came the reply, "but he isn't bothering us and we aren't bothering him!"

All ships were so occupied shooting at Kamikazes during the morning that the crippled Jap was not bothered until early afternoon. Meanwhile she had been declassified to "enemy destroyer." Admiral Berkeley dispatched one of his destroyers, the WALKER (Commander George F. Davis), to take care of the enemy ship—just in case.

It proved to be good target practice, although faintly akin to beating a dead horse.

Ashore, things rolled ahead much faster than anticipated. By noon the old Army airstrip southwest of San José had been given the once-over by the Engineers and the initial survey for another strip, to be called Hill Strip in memory of the Army Chief of Staff killed on NASHVILLE, had been begun. The 1,200 service troops who had been brought along for the sole purpose of unloading 27 LSTs worked like the proverbial beavers. Originally it had been thought that two days would be required to do the unloading, but the troops and the LST crews worked so well and the hard beach was such a perfect platform that all the landing ships were emptied before dark.

This pleased all concerned, from Admiral Struble to Seaman Jones, for no one cherished the thought of lying exposed to Kamikazes any longer than absolutely necessary. The land-based Army and Marine airplanes had been called back to Leyte where thick weather was threatening to bar

landings on the airstrips, and the carrier planes had their hands full of Kamikazes over their own ships. That evening, a day thankfully ahead of schedule, the transport group formed up and headed south through the Sulu Sea.

4

Farther to the south, off the coast of Panay, the Slow Carrier Task Force had been under attack since early morning but was only lightly damaged.

An hour before sunrise an enemy snooper plane had dropped a white flare on the port side of the formation. Admiral Stump had ordered a couple of emergency turns and the snooper then had dropped a couple of red flares to starboard, ignoring the destroyer fire.

The first suicide dive came about 0800, when a single torpedo plane came in low over the water but was shot down by AA fire before he could do any damage.

Then two more planes came gliding down in tandem toward the carrier *MARCUS ISLAND* and just missed her flight deck. The first came so close that its wing clipped a lookout.

Two more suiciders crashed close aboard *NEW MEXICO* and *WEST VIRGINIA* but did no damage.

When the smoke cleared, about 1100, the box score stood at five shot down by ships' gunfire, four splashed by the Combat Air Patrol, four crashed into the water, and two escaped.

That morning the carrier force had begun a retirement toward the Mindanao Sea along the same route they had come, all the while keeping Combat Air Patrols over the Slow Tow Convoy and over itself. A fighter sweep had also been sent against a troublesome field on nearby Negros.

But the "jeeps" job was not yet done. At 7:50 that evening when twelve miles south of Negros, Ruddock received orders from Admiral Kinkaid telling him to come about. The Mindoro beachhead needed cover the next day and the weather threatened to ground the Leyte-based planes.

Trailing the main Mindoro Attack Force at a pace that approximated that of a lethargic turtle was the Slow Tow Convoy. They made a rather scrambled and disorganized picture, these tug-towed barges and yard tankers which made up the convoy, yet they carried gasoline and supplies highly vital to the men on Mindoro.

"I consider the entire voyage of the Slow Tow Convoy a comical yet serious saga of the sea," said Captain John B. McLean, who received the orders to take charge of the Slow Tow only 15 hours before shoving off.

"I sent an urgent request to Army Headquarters requesting names and coded calls of the Army units, but received no response. Since we were supposed to get underway at 0600, I ordered my flagship BUSH with RADFORD [destroyers] to start rounding up the convoy at 0530. It was impossible to communicate by radio, so contact was made by hail and flashing light."

When time came for departure, Captain McLean, amused but slightly upset, asked the ships, "What are your orders?"

"We have no instructions, Sixth Army is to give us instructions," replied the skipper of an Army tug.

"Don't know," answered another tug skipper.

"Only orders verbal to drop barge and return," replied a third.

Lieutenant Commander Percy L. Lilly, Jr., BUSH's executive officer, recalled that one of the tugs was Australian: "We steamed alongside her. A barrel-chested, gray-haired man was on her bridge. Captain McLean picked up his megaphone and shouted across at him: 'Are you the Captain?' 'Yes, I'm the Captain,' the Aussie roared back. He didn't use a megaphone and certainly didn't need one. 'You head up the port column!' instructed Captain McLean. I can still hear the 'Aye, Aye' that boomed back."

"The business of forming up this motley assembly of 4-knot tows was extremely difficult," continued McLean. "Some had longer tows than others, making it difficult to balance the ships; some had high-frequency radios; some had low-frequency and others had none. All differed in armament and speed. Some could read only those Navy signals which affected speed and course.

"We tried to make a feint into Panoan Bay [southern tip of Leyte] but because of the slow speed and current the convoy had to steer a course 60 degrees from that made good, making the feint only partially successful.

"Upon entering the Sulu Sea the 4-knot convoy became stationary for about six hours as it bucked a strong head wind and adverse current.

"Although suicide bombers attacked the formation several times, they were confused because the screening ships BUSH (Commander Rollin E. Westholm), RADFORD (Commander Gordon L. Caswell), HALFORD

(Commander Robert J. Hardy) and the destroyer escorts *JOBB* (Lieutenant Commander Herbert M. Jones) and *HOLT* (Lieutenant Commander Victor Blue) continually circled the convoy, keeping a maximum number of guns bearing outboard at all times."

By the time the ships arrived off the Mindoro beaches the day after the landing, five planes had been shot down and the convoy had escaped injury.

After unloading, the motley fleet started the long voyage home, to Leyte Gulf. On the last day out the smallest Army tug fell out of formation and signaled the rest of the convoy to go on. He was having trouble and found it impossible to keep up. Captain McLean, deeply attached by this time to his strange wards, slowed the entire convoy down one knot to enable the little fellow to keep pace.

"He deserved a 'Well done,' " said McLean, "and he got it."

But MacArthur had what he needed and wanted, a springboard to Luzon. It wasn't more than a toe hold, but it would do.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A Withered Navy Strikes

I

IT WAS late afternoon, the day after a very un-Yulelike Christmas. Admiral Kinkaid had just come from a routine conference with General MacArthur and now he stood on the mud-splattered dock at Tacloban waiting for a small boat to take him to his flagship, the *WASATCH*, anchored in the bay. A messenger rushed up with an urgent dispatch: "Jap surface forces sighted . . . headed for Mindoro."

A few minutes later, when Admiral Kinkaid arrived at his flagship, he was met by Admiral Chandler.

"I know exactly what to do," said Chandler.

"Good luck," replied Kinkaid.

The possibilities had been talked over. The likelihood of a surprise Japanese surface raid on Mindoro, and perhaps an attempted counter-landing, had been the subject of wide concern. After all, the Japanese had made such an attempt on stouter-held Leyte. Even the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington had sent a dispatch inquiring what steps were being taken to protect our flying toe hold. The daytime, clear-weather answer was planes from Leyte; otherwise surface ships. And the Japanese, naturally, took advantage of the weather. For a thousand years they had considered the weather an ally.

Admiral Chandler quickly formed up his four cruisers¹ and several destroyers and started for Mindoro at flank speed. Even at that he could hardly get there until after sunrise the next morning.

Things had gone well up to then on Mindoro. Nearly twelve thousand combat troops had quickly staked out their perimeter. Patrols were pushed vigorously, but only small enemy groups were encountered—and these were looking for food, not a fight.

The main effort on Mindoro, however, was an engineering one. Six

¹ LOUISVILLE (Capt. Rex L. Hicks), PHOENIX (Capt. Jack H. Duncan), MINNEAPOLIS (Capt. Harry B. Slocum), and BOISE (Capt. Willard M. Downes).

thousand service troops, including the Australian 3rd Airdrome Construction Squadron, labored hard and well to make ready the two airstrips. Within five days after the landing Hill strip was ready for fighters and the work on the San José strip, which was to accommodate bombers, was running far ahead of schedule. While on Leyte the basic problem had been sopping up mud, on Mindoro it was laying dust.

The Japanese did not just squat on their heels and watch. Each day their suiciders came winging down out of the sun. Their favorite targets seemed to be the PTs and their base at Caminawit Point, which jutted into Mangarin Bay. Each day from two to a dozen planes would drop from the skies. But the little "spitkits" could wiggle fast and shoot well, and usually escaped. On the 18th, however, a Val (Jap Navy dive bomber) had crashed the PT 300, which immediately burst into flame, broke in two, and sank. Eight men were killed and six more wounded.

Christmas Eve had been full of air alerts—"Flash Red, Flash Red"—but nevertheless the men of the Mindoro beachhead enjoyed a turkey dinner the next day and shared it with 1,500 Filipinos. The traditional fowl had been flown in for the occasion.

2

The first indication that the Japanese were up to something came at 4:15 on the afternoon of the 26th. Lieutenant Paul F. Stevens, Jr., who was piloting a four-engined Navy patrol plane—a PB4Y, the Navy version of the Army Liberator—reported that a Japanese task force, consisting of one battleship, one cruiser, and six destroyers, was heading in toward the Mindoro beachhead from the South China Sea at twenty knots.

Another force of transports and cargo ships with escort steaming south from Subic Bay, Luzon, had been sighted and attacked by Mindoro-based Army planes. It looked as if the Japanese were out to push the Americans back into the sea.

On Mindoro there was great excitement. General Dunckel believed the enemy would attempt a night amphibious landing co-ordinated with a paratroop attack on the two airstrips about five miles inland. He began placing his troops to counter such a move.

Lieutenant Stevens landed his big plane, although officially the San José strip was not ready to accommodate such craft, refueled, bombed

up, and took off. Thirteen Army B-25s, the fast twin-engined Mitchells, their bellies full of 500-pound bombs, rose to attack. Fighters, too, streamed out—Mustangs, Thunderbolts, Lightnings. Everything that would fly was thrown into the air.

The only naval forces available to fight the onrushing Japanese were the twenty-two PT boats under command of Lieutenant Commander N. Burt Davis, Jr. There had been no heavy naval force in the Sulu Sea since the withdrawal of the escort carrier-old battleship force on the 16th, as the Japanese well knew. To have kept one there with the skies full of Kamikazes would have proved too costly—probably more costly than a surprise raid on the beachhead. Indeed, a single Kamikaze hit on the NASHVILLE had caused more casualties than the Army was to suffer during the whole Mindoro operation.

The job of mothering the four Liberty ships that lay off the beachhead unloading was given to the PTers. The merchantmen were told to move south from their exposed position to the more protected waters of Mangarin Bay and Pandarochan Bay.

Only eleven of the PTs were operational, the others being in various stages of overhaul or repair. Lieutenant Commander Davis decided to keep these boats between the enemy and the shore and not to attack unless the Japs came within three miles of the beach. In the confusion of battle American pilots, unable to be kept aware of the movements of the PTs, might mistake them for enemy.

At a quarter to seven that evening four PTs (80, 77, 82 and 84) with Lieutenant Commander Alvin W. Fargo, Jr., in charge left the base to take up a position to the north, astride the approach route of the enemy force. Fargo would report the enemy's movements to Davis back at the base, who in turn would pass the word along to the air command and to the other PT boats. Fargo would then stick with the Japanese as they moved south and if they got in close enough would attack. It was like mice preparing to trap elephants.

Three PTs (78, 81 and 76) under Lieutenant John H. Stillman stood by outside Mangarin Bay while two more (PTs 230 and 227) commanded by Lieutenant (jg) Robert F. Keeling stayed in the bay.

Earlier that evening Lieutenant Philip A. Swart, riding in the PT 223 with the PT 221 in company, had headed northwest up the coast to land several guerrillas and an Army radar team on the north coast of the island.

The Japanese steamed on, heading for Mindoro Strait.

Then the planes attacked on signal. The wild scene in the dark that followed was as dazzling and as bitter as any action of the Pacific War. Antiaircraft fire from the enemy ships cut red fiery gashes through the night. These were answered by dizzy patterns of exploding bombs. Some of the aircraft used their running lights to identify themselves as they swooped low on strafing and bombing runs. The night was turned into a mad, whirling, burning chaos.

"It looked like hell upside down," remarked one pilot.

Lieutenant Stevens in his big bomber claimed two hits on the largest Jap ship. Lacking more bombs, he continued to track the force.

The Japanese fought the swarms of planes with a deadly fire. Before the night was through they had erased from the Army's roster four B-25s, four P-38s, seven P-47s, five P-40s, and one Navy PBM patrol bomber.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Fargo's four PTs had made contact with the Jap task force forty miles north of the base. The enemy ships at the time were under heavy aircraft attack, and a large glow lit the sky. Some of the bombs had found their mark. Fargo reported the situation back to Davis at the base and continued to track the force as it moved south. He was under orders, however, not to attack unless a landing was attempted.

About nine-thirty the Japanese discovered their diminutive shadowers and lashed out at them. The first salvo straddled. This sent the little boats into high-speed zigzags. As they twisted and heeled they spurted blobs of smoke to cover themselves. To enliven things more during the heavy and accurate enemy shelling—it lasted for eighty minutes—the squirming PTs were also attacked by aircraft. Just who these aircraft belonged to was a question many a PTER would still like to have answered, for from all evidence the Japanese had none. At any rate the boats got the works from the planes—bombing, strafing, flares—for over an hour. Men were knocked cursing to the decks by near explosions. Twelve men on the PT 17 were wounded by a near miss. A man on the PT 84 was blown overboard by another. The PTs, however, did not fire on the planes; they had two reasons, one practical, the other sentimental. They did not want to present a better target and they did not want to shoot down any honestly erring American aviator.

Fargo wanted to attack the ships approaching Illin Island but Davis radioed "no." He told Fargo's force to proceed to the southern entrance of Illin Strait—that narrow strait between Illin Island and Mindoro con-

necting Pandarochan Bay and Mangarin Bay—and stop any Japs from sneaking in from that direction.

At 2230—half past ten at night—the enemy was just a few miles west of Caminawit Point and shelling “to beat hell.” Star shells and flares burst brightly over the entrance to Illin Strait and over Mangarin Bay. The liberty ship JAMES H. BREASTED anchored nearby received a shower of shells and began to flame.

Lieutenant Stillman’s three PTs slightly north of Illin Island were straining to attack, an understandable impulse since they, too, were receiving their share of shells. But the leash was held tight. Davis was keeping his powder dry in case of a landing.

The Japanese, after a thorough shelling of Caminawit Point, steamed north and stopped to give the San José airfield area a workout.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Swart and his two PT boats far to the north had got radio word of the battle going on. Coming about, they headed south and saw the sky lit with flares, gunfire, and explosions. At 0045 two lookouts reported two enemy ships.

This time permission was given to attack.

A searchlight speared the night five hundred yards to the north of the PT 221. It came from the leader of two destroyers which appeared to be screening two larger ships farther out to sea. The broom of light swept over the dark waters and finally stopped on the PT 221, whose skipper, Lieutenant (jg) Edward H. Lockwood, frantically tried to wiggle free. Five seconds later shells started peppering the water. Lockwood attempted to lay a puff of smoke but the smoke generator stuck in the “on” position and a steady stream gushed forth. For several minutes the Japs directed their fire at the erupting PT. It was tough for the 221, but made it easy for the 223. Lieutenant (jg) Harry E. Griffin, Jr., his heart full of sorrow for Lockwood’s boat, found consolation in the chance to sneak his boat in undetected.

“Number one torpedo ready.”

“Fire!”

Ten seconds.

“Number two torpedo ready!”

“Fire!”

Both wakes looked “hot, straight and normal” as they disappeared into the darkness. Griffin gripped the rail, mentally ticking off the seconds. Still the destroyer whaled away at the other PT. An orange-red flash tore

the night. Seconds later the sound of an explosion came rolling over the water. After that: quiet. No further explosions, no further salvos.

The Japanese ships then retired to the westward at high speed, never again to appear in the Philippines.

The damage ashore had been slight. A few supplies destroyed but nothing more. The JAMES H. BREASTED had had a bad time of it but she still floated. There was no attempted landing, nor were paratroops dropped.

All the next day PTs carefully combed the seas for survivors. The man who had been blown overboard from the PT the night before was picked up uninjured. A dead American pilot was dragged aboard. Late in the afternoon five Japanese sailors were fished out. They said they were survivors from the Japanese destroyer KIYOSHIMO. Their ship, damaged from air bombing, had been sunk by a torpedo. The PT 223 had aimed well.

The Japanese force—the 2nd Diversion Attack Force as it was grandly called—had consisted of two cruisers, OYODO and ASHIGARA, and six destroyers.¹ The ships were scarred survivors of the Battle for Leyte Gulf.

Admiral Chandler's cruiser-destroyer force arrived too late to cross salvos with the enemy and after cruising around for a time in the Sulu Sea it headed back to Leyte Gulf.

Score one more for the Splinter Fleet!

¹ KASOMI, KIYOSHIMO, ASASHIMO, SUGI, HINOKI, and KAYA. The new 27,000-ton carrier UNRYU was supposed to have been with the Second Diversion Attack Force but she was sunk, loaded with planes and personnel, on the afternoon of December 19 north of Formosa in the East China Sea by the submarine REDFISH (Comdr. Louis D. McGregor, Jr.).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Navy Runs a Kamikaze Gantlet

I

THE ARMY was well entrenched on its hunk of Mindoro.

The airstrip construction was progressing much faster than planned, and all looked rosy indeed, but the fact still remained that a beachhead needed supplies and supplies, and more supplies. These had to be brought by ship over the 480-mile route winding tenuously through hostile waters, within eye-view of scores of enemy airfields. It was a labor to make Hercules shudder.

Unlike the original landing force, the resupply convoys did not have the air protection of the escort carriers. Nor did they have Task Force 38 standing by to throw a blanket over the 100 Luzon fields. Besides, the element of surprise was gone by this time. Japanese air commanders, warned of the approaching convoys, had a pretty good guess they were headed for Mindoro's beaches.

Before ships left Leyte Gulf for the Mindoro beef run, their crews knew that the job would be tough; many ships would be sunk, many lives lost. But they also knew the job had to be done, and there was always that amulet or medal or mascot to cause Death to detour.

"There was this guy in front of me and zowie, all of a sudden his head was off. So I turns to the guy behind me, and he's dead. I tell you, this rabbit's foot . . ."

The first resupply echelon—as it was called in Navy lingo—consisted of 11 destroyers,¹ 14 LSTs, 6 freighters, 4 LCIs, and an Army tanker.

For some of the LSTs this was the second run within a week to Mindoro, two and a half days away.

Things were pretty quiet for two days, until dusk of December 21.

¹ AUSBURNE (Lt. Comdr. Howard W. Baker), McGOWAN (Comdr. William R. Cox), WILLIAM D. PORTER (Comdr. Charles M. Keck), MILTON (Comdr. Lt. Comdr. Ellis H. McDowell), John (Comdr. John B. Morland), (Lt. Comdr. S. Alston Ramsey), KIMBERLY (Comdr. W. D. Whitfield), NEWCOMB (Comdr. E. McMillian), LOWRY (Comdr. Edwin S. Miller), BRYANT (Comdr. Paul L. High), YOUNG (Comdr. Donald G. Dockum).

"We went to general quarters about 1700," said Lieutenant (jg) J. B. McClendon of the LST 460. "I remember the time because I remarked to one of the officers who was later killed: 'I hope this doesn't mess up our chow.'"

"Shortly afterward we received a report that 15 bogies had split up and were coming our way. I saw three of the planes as they came over. One of them picked us out, banked over and headed in at about a 45-degree angle. I don't know what type of plane, whether it carried bombs or whether it was strafing. All I know is that it looked big as a mountain and it looked like he would hit right where I was standing.

"At one time the thought struck me to take off my earphone and go below, but I didn't have time. Besides, the passageways were jammed with men.

"Suddenly I dove face down on the steel deck and the plane skimmed over my head, lifted a little, and hit the mast just below the yardarms and then crashed right into the conning tower.

"The engine evidently went straight on down through the conning tower, through the wheelhouse, through the wardroom, and into the tank deck on top of our load of ammunition. Parts of the burning plane scattered the length of the ship. The pilot's body was hurled clear of the plane and landed by one of the 20mm gunners.

"There was a thundering explosion and flash-back as the plane crashed. I felt the intense heat, protected as I was by the chart-room bulkhead. I jumped up and the ship's doctor was standing near me.

" 'Are you hurt?' I asked.

" 'No, I reckon not. Are you hurt?' said the Doc.

" 'No, I reckon not,' I replied.

"But many were. Just then a signalman with his eye, cheek, and shoulder bleeding came off the bridge. How he lived through the blast I'll never know, but he was dragging another signalman who had one leg off at the knee and who was cut up pretty badly inside.

"The Doc didn't give the signalman much chance, but he put a tourniquet around his leg and gave him some morphine. Hearing that more wounded men were topside, several of us started up the ladder. The smoke and blaze got the best of us and we started down when I heard someone calling

"Looking at [redacted] the Navigation Officer, [redacted] back, crawling out of the flame on his hands and knees. After dragging him to the doctor I went topside to have another look.

"When I got up there all of the men were dead. The conning tower was completely sheared off and all men who had been in the conn just weren't there. Their bodies had either been blown off with the initial blast or they had been carried down to the tank deck by the engine.

"We soon decided that we had better get off the ship. With the water main sheared, there was no way to fight the fire, which had spread from stem to stern. Ammunition was popping in all directions and more men were being wounded by the minute.

"Our problem now was to get all the fellows off. We tied life jackets around the wounded and threw them over, but some of the soldiers didn't want to go over the side and some of them went wild. I remember one who came out of the fire amidships with his life jacket ablaze. He ran screaming up and down the deck and started back into the fire. I yelled at him and as I did he slipped and fell. A Chief, who had not yet abandoned ship, and I caught him, pulled off his burning life jacket, and after slipping the Chief's life jacket on him we heaved the hysterical soldier into the sea.

"Then the Chief didn't have a life jacket. We looked and looked, but couldn't find another life jacket. Finally we saw a dead soldier floating by and I told the Chief to dive in and take the dead man's jacket. The Chief didn't want to at first, but finally he dived in and held onto this dead soldier until he was picked up."

The LST 749 and the Liberty Ship JUAN DE FUCA were also hit during the attack. None of the ships were sunk but the two LSTs were so badly damaged that they were anchored and abandoned. The Liberty proceeded on with the convoy, which arrived off Mindoro the next morning. The landing ships were quickly unloaded and returned to Leyte the same day without incident.

It was the second resupply convoy that really caught hell. The destroyer BUSH, flagship for the convoy commander, Captain John B. McLean (who had taken the original slow tows to Mindoro), sounded general quarters 49 times in three days.

Under a rainy sky the convoy sortied from Leyte Gulf on December 27. The formation covered three square miles of sea. Nine destroyers¹ served as an outer screen in front of the ships. Then came a cluster of

¹ BUSH (Comdr. Rollin E. Westholm), PAUL HAMILTON (Comdr. Daniel Carlson), PRINGLE (Comdr. John L. Kelly, Jr.), EDWARDS (Lt. Comdr. Simon E. Ramey), STEVENS (Comdr. William M. Rakow), STERETT (Comdr. Francis J. Blouin), GANSEVOORT (Comdr. John M. Steinbeck), PHILLIPS (Comdr. James B. Rutter, Jr.), WILSON (Comdr. Colin J. MacKenzie).

25 LSTs, five columns of five ships. Next three Liberty Ships (WILLIAM SHARON, JOHN BURKE, FRANCISCO MORAZON); two seaplane tenders, SAN PABLO (Commander Chauncey S. Willard) and HALF MOON (Commander Jack I. Bandy); a PT tender ORESTES (Lieutenant Karl Mueller) which also carried Captain George F. Mentz and his staff; the Navy tanker PORCUPINE (Lieutenant Duane M. Paul) and six Army tankers. Bringing up the rear were 23 LCIs. In all, 99 ships.

"Commencing the first night when the enemy dropped a depth charge in the convoy," related Captain McLean, "I sort of had an idea they might be out to get us."

Through the night there had been some snooping but no attacks developed until midmorning of December 28 when six Jap dive bombers (Vals) came in on the starboard quarter. The convoy erupted a wall of fire. No air cover was overhead and the ships had to depend on their guns.

One Val peeled off and headed down for the LCIs. But sharp-eyed gunners on the LCI 1076 winged him and he fell flaming into the sea. One crashed into the superstructure of the WILLIAM SHARON. A minute later another hit the JOHN BURKE, loaded to the gunnels with high explosives. Nervous eyes which had been glued to her all the time blinked at the blinding flash; an explosion like undersea thunder shook every ship in the convoy. Then a sooted white cloud mushroomed high in the air and hung where the BURKE had been—but wasn't any more. Ships two miles away had their hulls dished in by the explosion. An Army tanker immediately astern was sunk by the blast. PTs close by were actually lifted out of the water.

Commander A. Vernon Jannotta, who commanded all the LCIs and who was riding in the 624, deployed to pick up survivors. But after an exhaustive search only two men, both from the Army tanker, could be found, and one of those died shortly after.

Fortunately at this time air cover caught up and the remaining Japs were chased away.

Meanwhile WILLIAM SHARON was burning furiously, and the destroyer WILSON closed to lend a hose.

By midafternoon the fires on WILLIAM SHARON had been extinguished but the big ship was unnavigable. After all her surviving personnel had been taken aboard WILSON she was left adrift with one anchor out to prevent grounding. Her cargo of gasoline, TNT, trucks, beer, and rations

would never reach Mindoro. The WILSON then set a course to rejoin the convoy.

All that afternoon and evening small groups of Vals and Bettys (twin-engined Navy bombers) struck at the convoy. Sometimes the enemy planes zoomed over in low strafing runs. Hardly a ship was without its casualties. After dusk a half dozen planes came in on a low-level bombing and torpedo run. The LST 750 in the middle of the convoy was struck in the engine room by a torpedo. A total wreck, she had to be sunk by gunfire. Another torpedo passed under the LCI 624 from stem to stern but miraculously did not explode. While still under heavy attack the LCIs 1000, 1001, 1005, and 1006 rescued 183 from the LST 750.

The Japanese were hitting hard and the two planes that served as night cover for the convoy could not keep them out. Radio Tokyo reported that the convoy was screened by 20 cruisers and 20 destroyers and it was possible that the Japanese thought the convoy was heading for Luzon.

The next day was the same—Japanese planes attacking, strafing, bombing, crashing. Many were knocked down by the air cover, many by ships' AA fire. From dusk until one-thirty the next morning all ships remained at their battle stations sweating out attacks. During the night PTs reported dark objects floating in the water between the convoy columns. They were mines dropped by some of the aircraft, but only one LST struck one, fortunately without much damage.

What was it like? Ask a survivor.

"During the night attacks," says Commander MacKenzie of WILSON, "the picture changed so fast it was impossible to record exactly what happened. And afterwards everybody was too tired and too jumpy to attempt to draw a concise picture."

The next morning, December 30, still plagued by attacking planes, the convoy pulled up off the San José beaches and immediately started unloading. All was quiet until three-thirty in the afternoon when four single-engined Japanese planes were seen circling overhead at about 14,000 feet. Then one by one they nosed over in their dives, each headed toward a different target: one at the destroyer GANSEVOORT patrolling outside Mangarin Bay; one at the destroyer PRINGLE; one at the Navy tanker PORCUPINE, loaded with aviation gasoline, and one at the PT tender ORESTES.

The attack was 100 per cent perfect.

The GANSEVOORT was hit amidships, her engine room destroyed, and most of her guns knocked out. She was later beached and abandoned.

The PORCUPINE, already damaged by a near miss on the voyage, was crashed and the resulting fire completely gutted her.

The PRINGLE was hit but not completely destroyed.

The ORESTES, loaded with gasoline, torpedoes, ammunition, spare parts, and supplies, was hit by a suicider lucky in the death he had chosen; already aflame from AA fire, his craft a pyre, his was a luck he never knew. This plane hit the water. By all odds it should have sunk but it ricocheted into the starboard side of the tender. Her starboard quarter and superstructure were immediately engulfed in flames and 40mm and 20mm ammunition boxes instantly began exploding, throwing shells in every direction.

Many people, including the skipper, were blown overboard. Soon the water was full of swimming men. PTs and small craft came in to pick up survivors.

Commander Jannotta brought the LCIs 624 and 636 alongside to fight the fire. In spite of intense flames and choking fumes a fire-fighting party led by Ensign John A. Dennis, including E. M. Garrett, BM1/c, L. D. Covell, CY, and R. L. Hayden, SM1/c, boarded the tender with fire-fighting equipment. They were soon joined by Lieutenant Commander Davis from the PT base, who led a search for additional wounded.

After dark that evening the fires were finally extinguished. Using the two LCIs, Commander Jannotta then beached the ORESTES near the PT base at Caminawit Point so that her much-needed supplies, at least those which were unroasted, could be salvaged.

Casualties on the ship consisted of 45 killed or missing and 85 wounded. Nearly all her officers were killed or wounded. Captain Mentz had both arms broken. All the ships' cooks of PT Squadron 24 were aboard ORESTES at the time of the crash drawing chow. Five of them were listed as missing. By midnight all the injured survivors had been transferred to the Army hospital at San José.

All the men who escaped felt lucky to be alive, felt thankful that they would see the New Year. But Fate had one more ghastly trick up her scorched sleeve.

Fifteen minutes after 1945 made its appearance over the smoldering Philippines, a lone Japanese plane dropped an antipersonnel bomb on the PT base at Caminawit Point. Eleven men were killed and ten seriously wounded. Most of them were survivors of ORESTES.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Ghost Gallops

I

WHILE THE JAPS were being beaten back on the sea, and over it, all during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, they were also getting some belly punches from the submarines.

On a bright day in December, 1944, the submarine *BARB* headed out to sea from Midway on her eleventh war patrol. In command was a young, aggressive redhead with a quick smile—Commander Eugene B. Fluckey.

Christmas was celebrated with appropriate carols and festivities on the yonder side of the date line. Two days later *BARB* put into Guam and there joined up with two other subs, *QUEENFISH* and *PICUDA* (Commander Evan T. Shepard) to form a Wolf Pack under command of Commander Charles E. Loughlin in *QUEENFISH*.

The destination of the pack was the Formosa Strait but, because of many minefields, the route laid out was a rather circuitous one—up to the empire, around the southern coast of Kyushu into the China Sea, and then down along the coast of China, past Shanghai, into the Strait of Formosa. Through here funneled Japan's compressed pipeline to the Southern Resource Area.

Three days after departing from Guam and on the first day of the New Year *QUEENFISH* made contact with a small patrol boat, smack in the middle of the ocean, about 300 miles from the Ryukyu Islands. She and *PICUDA* immediately began to shell the little vessel, but before the enemy could be destroyed a roving Nip patrol plane drove the two subs underwater.

All the while *BARB* was about two hours' run away, her crew feeling very sad about missing the excitement but knowing nothing of the patrol plane. The *BARB* radioed to *QUEENFISH* and asked to be "cut in on the dope." The reply directed *BARB* to attack at her discretion while the other subs continued on.

When *BARB* arrived, the small vessel was drifting helplessly with wisps of smoke curling from her superstructure. On her decks there was no sign of life.

The *BARB*, surfacing, approached cautiously, with all her guns on the enemy vessel. Before sinking the vessel, Fluckey decided to send a boarding party over to do a little scavengering.

"The Japs at this time," related Fluckey, "were hiding down in the crew's bunk room aft, which was very dark, armed and ready to shoot it out from ambush. My boarding party left in a hurry and forgot to take a flashlight, so they just closed the hatch into that part of the ship and didn't go down.

"In about 15 minutes they stripped the ship, practically tearing it apart with crowbars. They took everything: a sextant, German binoculars, compasses, a barometer, radio transmitter and receiving sets, charts, rifles, and various technical-looking books.

"It was odd. The ship had two decks and it was funny to be on our bridge and watch the boarding party at work. One of the men would be stripping something down below and he'd hear footsteps above him. He'd think it was a Jap and he'd come out with his tommy gun. Well, the fellow above him would hear footsteps below, and he'd think it was a Jap coming from below decks. All of a sudden they'd poke their guns in each other's face and I'd be hooting and hollering to keep them from firing."

The vessel was identified to be a weather-reporting ship. After the boarding party had returned to *BARB* with everything of interest and value, the submariners started to shell it with their 4-inch deck gun. After a couple of rounds dug into the Jap's hull, the hidden Nip crew came running out on deck. The next few shells landed ensured that none of them would drown, anyhow.

Thirteen times the little vessel was hit before she went down smoking. All the while Kodachrome movies were taken from the bridge of *BARB*.

Following the sweeping, wind-about route, the three submarines finally arrived in the area near Formosa Strait. The *BARB* took up a position close in along the China coast.

One day, January 8, she sighted a convoy of eight good-sized ships with escort probably heading for Takao at the southern end of Formosa. The *BARB* immediately sent out a contact report to *QUEENFISH* and *PICUDA*, an hour's run away. Fluckey was afraid that the convoy would

head back to the China coast and thus escape, so he decided to try to turn them into the two approaching submarines.

Shortly after sunset, at about 5:30, *BARB* was in a position to attack.

As targets she picked out a supposed tanker, a transport, and a large freighter. Her first spread of torpedoes hit them all.

"When the torpedoes started hitting," recalled Fluckey, "there was a tremendous explosion. At the time I was very intent on getting the stern tube attack set up, wondering just how I would work it in. I didn't notice the explosion particularly and I idly remarked: 'Well, that's what I call a good solid hit.' Then looking around the conning tower I noticed from the expressions on the faces of the men and from the tinkling of broken light bulbs which had burst during the explosion that it was more than just an ordinary explosion. One of the seamen who was on the firing key turned around and said: 'Good God, I'd hate to be around when you think you hear a loud noise!'"

No wonder the explosion was shatteringly violent, for the ship hit, the one which had the outline of a tanker, was in reality a very large ammunition ship. That more than evened the score for the *BURKE* at Mindoro. The *QUEENFISH* and *PICUDA*, 20 miles away, saw her go cloud-high. Even at that distance they saw the ship blowing up in every direction, like the multiple explosions of a giant rocket. The concussion from the exploding ship ripped up a section of *BARB*'s deck aft and forced the submarine down sideways in the water. The concussion was so great that it even burst the lids on canned food in the storage spaces.

When *BARB*'s periscope was upped for a look-see at the damage, it was discovered that the convoy had turned to port, toward the two other submarines; exactly what Fluckey had hoped they would do. The ships were pretty well scattered, and everyone seemed to be out to save his own neck. Two escorts that were near the fatally hit tanker were nowhere to be seen—they had vanished. The transport had its nose in the mud—for it was shallow here along the coast—and escorts milled about her picking up survivors.

Darkness came and *BARB* surfaced for the chase. The ships were running for a mile-wide channel through a minefield off Formosa. Once there, they would be safe.

Meanwhile *QUEENFISH* and *PICUDA* attacked, sinking one ship and damaging another. It was a deadly gantlet the Japanese were running in their mad dash for safety.

The BARB cut in for another attack and loosed three torpedoes at a ship near the stern. For the second time BARB hit the jackpot.

"The explosion was terrific," said Fluckey. "As we headed out, pieces of steel were flying all around us. The rarefaction following the first pressure wave was almost indescribable. People in the control room felt that they were being sucked up the hatch. Men in the conning tower literally had the shirts pulled over their heads. On the bridge the effect was of a tremendous pressure inside each of us, and the breath was just wrenched from our lungs. Somehow, though, as my breath came tumbling out, I managed to say: 'All ahead flank!' I was anxious to get out of there.

"The explosion of this ammunition ship was a complete surprise to us. We thought she was just another freighter. By the light of the first explosion we could see her outline. Her masts went shooting into the sky and I told everyone on the bridge to take cover. The boys, though, were just like me. They couldn't stay ducked for long, in spite of the steel whizzing around us. They would alternately duck and then gawk at this amazing sight going on in front of us. And some sight it was; something that even Hollywood couldn't duplicate. The whole horizon was lighted around completely, as bright as day. We stuck out like a proverbial sore thumb, but as I swept the horizon with my glasses, I saw all the escorts dashing away; so we didn't have to worry.

"At this point I was ready to haul ashes, but one of my officers came up to me and babbled: 'We can't let that last ship go, Captain. We can't let him go! There's one more ship left. We've got to get him!' I said: 'Well, calm down. If you think we should, well, maybe we'll go get him.' Then he said: 'Oh, I just love to hear the thump, thump, thump of the torpedoes and then see millions of bucks go sky-high.'"

All the while the torpedoed ammunition ship was spouting like a gigantic phosphorous bomb. The sales talk of his officer had been convincing, so Fluckey headed BARB in toward the remaining freighter.

But QUEENFISH and PICUDA wanted their share of the killings, so they said they would like to make this attack. The BARB assented. In a matter of minutes the Jap ship was on fire and sinking, hit by two torpedoes.

The night was scratched red with tracers from the sinking ship and her protecting escort. The BARB was still on the surface. Fluckey tells of the scene: "At this point people on the bridge were getting very excited. I could see, however, that the freighter was not firing at us, and its fire

was very high and erratic anyway. So I called aft and asked the men which way the Japs were shooting. I was just trying to calm the guys down by giving them something to think about. One of the officers replied: 'They are shooting left and right! No, they're shooting right and left. No, they're shooting right at us! We've got to get out of here!'

"Well, we were in no particular danger, so I thought I'd have some fun with him. I kept asking him to be specific and told him that left and right didn't mean anything to me since I didn't know which way he was facing. Finally he comes out with: 'They're shooting from port to starboard.' I said: 'Well, that's what I wanted you to say.' He turned around to me and said: 'Listen, this is a hell of a time to be specific!'"

The reluctant Jap finally went down. All the merchant ships in the convoy had been sunk with the exception of a freighter that had escaped by hugging close to the coast of Formosa and high-tailing it for Takao.

The next couple of weeks were relatively uneventful for BARB. Part of the time she spent on B-29 lifeguard duty. Part of the time she roamed up and down the China coast sniffing for convoys. The QUEENFISH, meanwhile, after expending all her torpedoes, headed for home.

Information was received from China telling of Japanese convoy movements. All of the Japanese shipping was moving very close to the China coast, about three or four miles within the 10-fathom curve.

Here, in shallow water, they were immune from daylight submarine attack. At sunset the convoys anchored in some protected cove and did not get underway again until after sunrise.

To check this information Fluckey moved his submarine in among the junk fleets close to shore. For hundreds of years, through war and peace, these antiquated craft had sailed up and down the ancient coast of China, their crews concerned only with the daily business of living. No doubt they were only mildly excited by the appearance in their midst of the grim undersea monster. Mingling thus with the rickety wooden craft of the Orient, BARB was relatively safe from being spotted by a Japanese patrol plane, for from a distance she looked much like a dismasted junk in tow.

Alerted by coast watchers of Captain Milton E. Miles's Unit Six, BARB spotted a group of Jap ships moving well within the 10-fathom curve. To attack in such shallow water, a submarine would have to behave like a PT boat. Submerging was out of the question. The 20-fathom curve—120 feet of water—was 20 miles away.

descriptions hurled through the night as the torpedoed ships continued to erupt.

The *BARB*, dashing for deep water, was now doing a job of broken-field running that would have made a Notre Dame halfback flush with envy. Wildly maneuvering, she twisted through the junk fleet. "Expect to see a junk pile up on the bow at any second," logged Fluckey. But none did.

Gunfire was heard from far astern, probably directed at some unfortunate junk.

An hour later Fluckey was happy to log: "The Galloping Ghost of the China Coast crossed the 20-fathom curve with a sigh. Never realized how much water that was before. However, life begins at forty (fathoms). Kept going."

For this daring exploit, Fluckey was given the Congressional Medal of Honor and *BARB* the Presidential Unit Citation.

2

"Gene" Fluckey, later flag lieutenant for another doughty submariner, Fleet Admiral and Chief of Naval Operations Chester W. Nimitz, is now breaking in submarines and crews at New London, Connecticut, and gardening on the side.

The lad is a walking legend. He took his recreation-hungry crew so close inshore of Japan one time they could watch a baseball game. On another occasion, seeing heavy railroad traffic on Japan, he found an inlet that was bound to be crossed by a train trestle and sent a landing party ashore to blow up the bridge.

They were gone an unconscionably long time, and Gene was just about to give them up as lost when he saw a long train approaching. Then came the anticipated ka-boom! Fifteen minutes later the rubber boat paddled up to the sub.

"It seemed a shame to blow up a train without watching the fireworks," the men apologized, "so we just waited . . ."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Sailors on Camels

I

"**S**AILORS ON HORSEBACK" is supposed to be a comic synonym for helplessness. "Sailors on camelback," for all that the humped beasts are called ships of the desert, ought to be funny to the point of side-splitting paradox.

But sailors on camelback were a material factor in winning the war in the Pacific. There were some deep in the bleak Gobi Desert who had more to do with movements of ships than many an admiral afloat, and this is how it was.

2

The weather of the Western Pacific is born over the frozen forests of Siberia, moves south across the great deserts and mountains of China, curves east toward the Home Islands of Japan, and from there works its way out over the watery waste of the western ocean. This is as inescapable an aerological fact as that Europe's weather is hatched in Greenland. And it was a fact just as inescapable that the American Fleet had to have good weather predictions in order to plan operations against Japan's gangling empire.

With their network of weather-reporting stations that strung from Manchuria, through occupied China, and almost to the northern tip of Australia, the Japanese had the aerological draw on the Americans, just as the German Army did in Greenland.¹ While the Japanese could easily measure the winds and temperatures over Asia, could plot the pressure areas, could tell the ships of the Imperial Fleet what kind of weather they would be operating in the following week, the Americans had to operate blindly from the east, guessing and cursing. There was only one solution:

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume II, "The Atlantic War."

to go into China behind the Japanese and set up weather stations of our own.

The man selected to do the job knew China well. He had been eight years on the China Station in his younger days. He was Commander Milton E. Miles.

People who did not know Commander Miles were often jolted to hear the brawny officer addressed by his friends as "Mary." The singularly incongruous nickname, as in the case of most naval officers, dates back to undergraduate days at Annapolis. In those days—Miles is of the class of '22—the glamour girl of the screen was Mary Miles Minter. It was only natural to undergraduate humor that Midshipman Miles be tagged with the feminine moniker: a fact that he accepted stoically and without rancor. It wouldn't have done him much good had he raved, raged, and rebelled.

Miles arrived alone in Chungking in May, 1942. He was soon joined by two assistants, Commander Raymond A. Kotrla, an expert on weather and intelligence, and Lieutenant Commander Daniel W. Heagy, communications officer. They immediately started making plans to weave a network of weather-reporting stations across that ancient land. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek assigned to him Lieutenant General Tai Li (pronounced Dye Lee), head of the Central Government's secret police force known with Oriental grandiloquence as the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the National Military Council. Never interviewed, seldom photographed, Tai Li was one of Chiang's chief lieutenants, a mystery man of the Orient indeed. In 1932 he organized the secret police and was its chief until his death in an air crash in 1946. In 1937 he directed the brilliant three-month defense of Shanghai against the modernly equipped, German-trained armies of Nippon. When, with the Japanese tide lapping at its heels, the Central Government moved its headquarters to Chungking, Tai Li went too and from there he continued to manipulate the strings of his intricate organization. It was a chapter out of *Fu Manchu*. Tai's net spread across the vast, wrinkled face of China, both the parts disfigured by invasion and the parts that still fought against the twin paralyses of conquest and economic chaos. The facilities of such an organization, Miles knew, would be priceless in establishing the Navy's system of observation and reports. The operation was known officially as "Friendship Project," not without an eye, or ear, rather, to the Chinese of doubtful allegiance.

3

Miles and Tai Li immediately started work. First there were discussions of intelligence in general. Miles was amazed at the extent of the Chinese network: from almost every city of occupied China, from Formosa, from Burma, from Indo-China, from the Netherlands East Indies, from the Philippines, reports poured in each day.

Miles wanted to see this fantastic system at work himself, so he and Tai Li set out for a tour of the coastal areas. Walking sometimes for as much as 30 miles a day, the two men zigzagged in and out of Japanese-occupied territory, unobtrusively surrounded by a guard of blank-faced, innocent-looking fighting men.

Once Miles, separated from Tai Li, was cut off by a fast-moving Japanese column and only escaped because his 15-man escort knew a hidden pass through which they whisked him to the far side of the mountains. If Miles ever had doubts that Tai Li's organization could conduct operations behind the backs of the Japanese—and it did sound a bit Hollywoodish at first hearing—he quickly changed his mind. With little equipment and a little training, wonders could be worked for the United States Navy, and the Army it was carrying ever close to Japan.

Tai Li was intensely interested in training his men in the latest techniques of sabotage. So Miles's group, with the aid of more men flown over the Hump, began instructing Chinese troops in aerology, intelligence, and guerrilla warfare. By the end of 1942 the first trickle of weather reports began to reach the Pacific Fleet.

As they inevitably will, certain administrative snarls developed; so, to iron them out, the SACO (Sino-American Co-operative Organization) agreement was drawn up in which the responsibilities of the Navy and of the Chinese government were clearly defined. What had started out to be a weather-forecasting agency now became a joint military mission. The agreement stated that SACO was organized "for the purpose of attacking our common enemy—by common effort employing American equipment and technical training and utilizing the Chinese war zone as bases." The objects to be attacked were "the Japanese Navy, the Japanese Merchant Marine, and the Japanese Air Forces in the various territories of the Far East; the mines, factories, warehouses, depots, and other military establishments in the areas under Japanese occupation." Under terms of the agreement, signed in April, 1943, Tai Li was to serve as

director of the organization while Miles, now a captain, was to be deputy director. Shortly afterward the Navy side of the organization was designated United States Naval Group, China, a title more embrative of Miles's enlarged mission.

Now things began to hum. Over the Hump came more Americans—combat experts, communicators, aerologists. Equipment, too, started streaming in—radio gear, explosives, arms—even weather-computing apparatus.

4

Coming into the ageless land of China was a new and strange experience for most of the Americans. Many had never been separated from the commonplace mechanical wonders of the Western world, such as doorknobs. Inland China was different. Values were topsy-turvy. The people worked hard, from earliest light to deepest dusk, scratching a livelihood from the long-overworked earth, but they smiled. Some even seemed happy, especially the children. Enthusiastic gangs of small fry would crowd around Americans, stick their thumbs up and shout "Tin Haol," the "ding how" which has since become current in the American vernacular as a handy phrase of optimism. Food was expensive in overcrowded Chungking, but eggs were as plentiful as you had dollars to buy them, memorable to the men who had been in England, where the ration was one egg a fortnight. Every morsel of land was under intense cultivation. It had to be, and for centuries had been, to support the dense population. The Oriental method of fertilizing the soil startled the new arrivals, who had to be extremely careful so as not to fall victim to that universal disease known as the "Yangtze Rapids" in China, the "Delhi Belly" in India, and dysentery in the medical books.

Tai Li threw the massive weight of his intricate organization behind the Navy program. As fast as they could be selected and manned, training camps were set up throughout China where Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personnel taught Chinese troops all phases of the most modern guerrilla warfare from mapping to amphibious tactics. The art came natural to the Chinese, and the improved techniques were welcomed. Special classes were trained in aerology, ship identification, communications, and photography.

Since weather reporting and coast watching are naturally complementary and easily combined, coastal weather stations were given the

added task of watching enemy ship movements. Shore-hugging shipping from Shanghai to Hong Kong was an important target both for fleet submarines and for the China-based aircraft of the Fourteenth Air Force at Kunming. Since the Japanese and their puppets, if not actually in physical control of the whole coast line, had free access to it, the job of spotting ship movements was a rather risky one. Navy Group units in Eastern China were often cut off from headquarters at Chungking for weeks by an apparently aimless foray of Japanese; communications were then maintained precariously by air or by radio.

Unit Six, located at Hwaiian, South Fukien Province, not far from Jap-occupied Amoy, was the base for a string of coast-watcher stations manned jointly by Americans and Chinese. Their reports were flashed to Unit Six, then shunted to Chungking, and finally beamed out to the fleet and the waiting submarines. One of the most daring and spectacular submarine attacks of the war, made by the *BARB* on a convoy near Foochow, described in the preceding chapter, was a direct result of coast-watcher reports.

5

Four days before the Christmas of 1944, Alfred W. Parsons, RM2/c, boarded a sampan with his coast-watcher partner, a Chinese captain. The trip they took was not far; just 150 yards in fact, to Whale Island, across from Amoy, where a good view could be had of all Jap shipping in the harbor. The two had done this often before, so neither felt particularly apprehensive.

After the brief journey, they started walking across the island to their post. A slight rustle in the tall grass was the only warning as fifty Japanese sprang upon them before they could reach for side arms.

Both were taken to Amoy, where, in spite of all the efforts of Tai Li's omnipresent men, they remained firmly behind bars. Eventually the Chinese captain was shot, and Parsons taken to Japan. He was the first of three American coast watchers to be captured during the war.

Otherwise the most serious trouble, next to dodging Japanese, was Chinese coast watchers who through ignorance or an Asiatic desire to please often made fantastic reports. Small patrol craft mounting a single, antiquated piece of ordnance often were reported as "warships." Once sea gulls circling a scow were described as planes homing on their carrier. Such mistakes, however, are not wholly peculiar to the Chinese. One of

the authors of this volume recalls that in the first days of the war an Army Air Force pilot had the full defenses of the Panama Canal Zone headquarters standing to arms with his report that a carrier task force was approaching the canal. Then a Norwegian whaler and her killer vessels steamed meekly into view.

For several reasons, the chief one being linguistic, it was decided to stiffen the whole coast-watching system with trained Americans. In January, 1945, the first units were ready, each man a skilled combination of recognition specialist, weather observer, and radioman. Five main units, each under an intelligence officer, were set up along the coast and from each central base fanned echelons of trained enlisted men.

6

Nurtured by necessity, Navy Group China rapidly grew beyond its intended size and purpose. Weather tracking, always the prime function, remained but one of many. By the end of the war NavGroup had trained 25,000 guerrillas and had sent many of her men into the field with the Chinese. In coolie garb, complete with large straw hat, these Americans fought a quick, stealthy war far behind the fluid Japanese lines. There was Lieutenant Joe Champe, who led the Yangtze River Raiders and often severed Nip supply lines in Central China. An appropriately named Marine Corps captain, Theodore R. Cathey, wrote a handbook for Chinese guerrillas. Marine Captain Milton A. Hull, much too big for his coolie disguise, blew up trains in North China, near Shanghai, practically in the shadow of Jap gun positions. Ensign John N. Matmiller revenged the capture of Parsons when he and four Chinese swimmers blew up a Jap ship alongside the dock at Amoy. Lieutenant Stanley E. McCaffrey took his walkie-talkie into front line with the Chinese troops who were resisting the Japanese drive down the Hangchow-Canton Railroad and coached fighter-bombers of the Fourteenth Air Force in on direct support missions.

Intelligence reports funneled into NavGroup's Chungking headquarters from thousands of sprawling sources: from Tai Li's agents and guerrillas, from prisoners of war, from photographs taken by the Fourteenth Air Force, and from the Navy's own scattered units. Each day these reports, evaluated and boiled down, were radioed around the globe—to Admiral King in Washington, to Admiral Nimitz on Guam, to General MacArthur in the Philippines, to the 20th Bomber Command.

Early in 1943 a field photographic interpretation unit was attached to headquarters of the Fourteenth Air Force at Kunming. The unit was small, consisting of one officer and one enlisted man, but it provided valuable and accurate information on the state of enemy shipping in the South China Sea in such important ports as Amoy, Foochow, Takao, and Hong Kong.

By May of 1944 this naval liaison unit with the Fourteenth Air Force had expanded to include in its functions the exchange and consolidation of intelligence information, especially as related to Japanese shipping along the China coast. Mining experts advised the Army and Navy Air Forces on mine types and mine-laying techniques. As a result of Fourteenth Air Force coastal mining, Japanese coast-hugging shipping was forced out to sea to become targets for American submarines.

When air strikes against the China coast were scheduled, the organization set up special facilities to rescue the inevitable percentage of aviators forced down. First, Army and Navy fliers were briefed extensively on survival methods and given the equipment for it, and identification patches to wear conspicuously. Village headmen were taught how to recognize American airmen, and instructed how to smuggle them back to safe hands.

By these precautions more than 900 fliers were rescued, 90 per cent of those who crashed or bailed out over Jap-held territory.

Naval parties surveyed the 1,000 miles of China coast from Shanghai to Hong Kong, reporting on possible bases and fleet anchorages, resources and defense of the area, beach conditions, and the possibility of advance into the interior of China. The Navy ashore in China was auxiliary eyes and ears for the Army and the Army Air Force as well as for its own commerce-destroying submarines which were starving Japan's industries at home and her troops afield.

But the main job, the unspectacular drudgery, was weather reporting from the Gobi Desert to Indo-China. As the Americans pressed the Japanese farther and farther westward, Fleet Weather Central at Chungking became one of the major factors in planning the liquidation of the empire.

By the end of the war "Mary" Miles, who had arrived in China as a commander with two men, was a rear admiral and his organization numbered 1,800. The Sino-American Co-operative Organization had developed into one of the most closely integrated Allied organizations that ever surmounted a language barrier.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Red Rain over Lingayen

I

THE SCATTERED ISLANDS of the Philippines are topped by the largest and principal island of the archipelago—Luzon. The heart of Luzon, both geographically and productively, is the mountain-girt Central Plain area which stretches through the center of the island from Lingayen Gulf south to Manila Bay. To the north the tangled, rugged mountain terrain is largely still unmapped despite four hundred years of Occidental military occupation, where the Igorrots and the stone-age pygmies lived undisturbed by wars of 1521, 1898, and 1941.

The great prize of Luzon was, of course, Manila. Manila Bay, with a circumference of 120 miles, is the finest harbor in the far East. For over two years the Japanese had used Manila as the main supply depot, not only for the Philippines but also for all the captured areas to the south. The bay, although well protected from natural storms, was not so well protected from man-made ones. As we have seen, the fliers from Task Force 38 made the bay untenable for Japanese shipping—as the Japanese had done for the Americans three years before. Manila, which before the war boasted a growing population of over 600,000, had been captured twice in its long history: once by the Americans in 1898 and once by the Japanese in 1941. The Americans were now out to take it back again.

When the Japanese swarmed over Luzon at the beginning of the war, one of their principal landings had been at Lingayen Gulf. From there they had swept down the Central Plain and entered Manila through the back door, thus avoiding the heavy and formidable fortifications in Manila Bay.

General Tomoyuki Yamashita, who now, three years later, was charged with the defense of Luzon, was not unaware that the Americans might try the same thing.

Horseshoe-shaped Lingayen Gulf is about 20 miles wide and 30 miles long. Manila is roughly 100 miles to the south. When the Japanese in-

vaded, they landed on the east side, the pocket of the gulf, where good beaches and a narrow coastal plain are backed by abruptly rising green hills. The Japanese General Staff had discounted as impractical a landing at the foot, or southern end, of the gulf because of the shallow water and high surf. There, too, the beaches are backed by numerous swamps, fish-ponds, and rice paddies intertwined by many ditches, streams, and good-sized rivers.

The Japanese defenses of Luzon had been greatly weakened by the fighting on Leyte. Yamashita had dispatched five of his best divisions to Leyte and had lost them all. One of these had been the Japanese 26th Division, which had landed at Ormoc on the stormy night of November 11. By next noon American aircraft had sent all the ships of the convoy to the bottom of the bay before a pound of rice or clip of cartridges could be unloaded. The hungry, sparsely equipped Japanese were annihilated by the American troops.

This same 26th Division was to have been used by Yamashita in the defense of the Lingayen Gulf area. Among the documents of this division captured on Leyte was a plan for maneuvers in the Lingayen area. It was quite revealing.

"If the enemy plans landing in Lingayen Gulf," it read, "we must expect that he will first gain a footing on the west coast of Luzon north of Lingayen Gulf and then will descend to the south by stages . . . If the enemy is allowed to penetrate into the plains of central Luzon he will be able to maneuver freely his overwhelming superior power, in particular his armored forces. We would have great difficulty in checking them or drawing them into a decisive engagement. Since the sector of the west coast described above is comparatively confined, the enemy would not be able to deploy large forces there. Therefore if we check the enemy in the vicinity of the lower part of the east side of Lingayen Gulf, we can prevent his advance to the Central Plain of Luzon . . ."

A realistic bit of advice was then given officers by the commanding general of the division: "You must realize that material power usually overcomes spiritual power in the present war. The enemy is clearly our superior in machines. Do not depend on your spirits overcoming this enemy . . . Devise combat methods based on mathematical precision. Then think about displaying your spiritual power . . ."

He was right, twice over.

Lingayen Gulf was indeed the spot that had been picked for the last

INVASION OF LINGAYEN GULF



major landing of Southwest Pacific Forces. But he was disastrously wrong once. The landing beaches selected were not on the eastern side of the gulf, where the Japanese were building their defenses with "mathematical precision," but were at the southern end, the "impractical" beaches.

Admiral Kinkaid and his chief deputy, Admiral Wilkinson, had both suggested to MacArthur that a landing in the Manila area would be less costly to the Navy inasmuch as the convoys would not be exposed as long to Kamikaze attacks. But MacArthur was determined: "For Army purposes the plains of Luzon are needed as a place for maneuver."

But by feints and diversions MacArthur hoped to keep the Japanese on Luzon guessing—and hopping. The next logical step, he hoped to make it appear after the invasion of Mindoro, would be a landing in the Manila-Batangas area of southern Luzon. Guerrillas in this area were given instructions to blow bridges and cut communications. PT boats nosed around the shore. Landings were made on the opposite Mindoro coasts, on both east and west sides. Then to heighten the effect a company of the 21st Infantry went ashore January 3 on the little island of Marinduque, off the southern coast of Luzon.

After the war Japanese Army leaders, including Yamashita, claimed that they were not fooled by these feints and that they always knew that the landing would be in the Lingayen area. Maybe not. The fact remains that when the Americans actually went ashore on Luzon, the Japanese, with every division except one in motion, were ill prepared to resist.

2

For the men of Third and Seventh Fleets, New Year's Eve would not be a night of confetti and laughter. There would be no horn blowing, no dancing. There would be no girls to kiss and no bottles to tilt. There would not even be a can of warm Ulithi beer.

Instead there would be watches: on the bridge peering intently into the night, in the engine rooms sweating among the hundreds of vibrating noises, beside the ready gun anxiously watching the sky. Men would yawn, glance at their watches, and wish they were below decks "sacked out."

Time, tide, and the war against the Japanese waited for no man. Holidays are born of peace and leisure. There was neither in the Western Pacific at the turn of the year.

The Japanese were definitely off balance in the Philippines, and MacArthur wanted to hit them quickly with the knockout punch—the great assault on Luzon. It was only after lengthy argument by his Army, Navy, and Air commanders that MacArthur agreed to postpone the Lingayen Gulf operation from December 20 to January 9. But even then MacArthur would need the close co-operation of the carrier-based air of the Third Fleet.

The plan was for Halsey's aviators to smother Jap air power on Formosa and the northern tip of Luzon during the approach and landing phases of the Lingayen operation. Co-ordination with the Southwest Pacific Forces was carefully worked out. Luzon was divided by an imaginary fence that crossed the island north of Lingayen Gulf. All Jap airfields north of the fence were fair game for Task Force 38. General Kenny's Fifth Air Force claimed all hunting rights south of the border.

Careful arrangements were made to isolate Luzon. Submarines from Australia and Guam speckled the Western Pacific as black as a piece of flypaper in a candy store. Every possible approach route to Lingayen was covered. Submarines were everywhere: in the China Sea, along the shipping routes that now bent inward to hug the China coast; astride the vital straits between Luzon and Formosa; off the shores of the Home Islands; around the Philippines.

Land-based planes fanned out in great arcs from three widely separated bases—from the hand-carved fields of China came the Fourteenth Air Force and the 20th Bomber Command, scouting the China Sea and Singapore areas, hitting hard at Formosa, the empire's midriff; from the Marianas came B-29s of the 21st Bomber Command, smashing at the Home Islands and scouting the northern seas; from Leyte, Mindoro, and Morotai came the Far Eastern Air Force (the expansion of the old Fifth Air Force that had bombed its way up through New Guinea), striking at Luzon and covering convoys. From these last three bases the Navy threw out long aerial searches, combing the seas for the remains of the Imperial Navy.

Formosa was to receive preferential attention from the carriers. Not only was Lingayen within range of its fields, but the big island's geographical position at the end of the Ryukyus chain made the piping of planes down from the empire a simple matter. On off days, when Halsey was either fueling or slapping at Luzon, Formosa was to receive attention from land-based Marianas bombers.

As at Ormoc and Mindoro, the chief headache for Admiral Kinkaid, whose Seventh Fleet would have to transport and land the Sixth Army with its supplies, was the Kamikaze. For months now Luzon had been smashed by both carrier and land-based planes, but there were over seventy fields still operational and within easy shuttling distance from Formosa, China, and the East Indies. Before attacking Luzon it was considered essential that Mindoro-based air be in a close supporting position to help handle the 450 Japanese planes estimated to be in the Luzon-Visayan area. Of these, 300 were thought to be in the vicinity of the Clark Field complex, north of Manila in the Central Plain of Luzon.

Further, it was estimated that the Japanese could make daily strikes, using 100 fighters and 50 bombers against the convoys en route to Lingayen. By pumping reinforcements in from Formosa and Japan these attacks, it was thought, could be sustained for as much as two weeks. That would mean a lot of damage to our ships. During the Leyte and Mindoro operations almost a hundred ships had been either sunk or damaged by the crashing Kamikazes.

The Japanese Fleet, shredded though it was, was also somewhat of a worry to the Lingayen planners. A night "hit and run" attack on the convoys was not impossible. On paper the Japanese still had quite a few ships split into two forces. To the north in the Empire-Formosa Area there were estimated to be four battleships, five carriers, five cruisers, and about a dozen and a half destroyers. To the south in the Singapore-Indo-China Area there were thought to be two half carrier-half battleships (the *ISE* and *HYUGA*, battleships with a small flight deck aft), four cruisers, and a dozen destroyers. But this list of ships was nothing like as formidable as it appeared on paper. Most of the ships had been badly damaged in the Battle for Leyte Gulf and could hardly get up enough steam to toot a whistle. And, although we didn't know it at the time, there were no trained Japanese Air Groups to fly from the carriers.

Any sortie of the Japanese Fleet would, indeed, be extremely hazardous. The hard-riding Third Fleet patrolled the waters to the east of the Philippines. To the west roamed American submarines. Also, the combat strength of the Seventh Fleet alone was superior to anything the Japs could muster. The Japanese certainly could not stop the Luzon Attack Force. The only question was how much we would have to pay in blood and ships to get through.

3

"The planning for the Lingayen Gulf Operation," said Admiral Kinkaid, "was much the same as for the invasion of Leyte. We had the same task force commanders, the same skippers, and the same ships, plus a few new ones that had recently arrived from the States."

Until October, 1944, the amphibious operations in the Pacific Area (Nimitz's territory) and in the Southwest Pacific Area (MacArthur's bailiwick) had been conducted independently by the forces available in the widely separated theaters. Occasionally the Pacific Area stretched out a long helping hand to MacArthur, as when its forces covered the landings at Hollandia and Morotai.

But when the time was ripe and the gap closed, Nimitz temporarily assigned large forces from his command to the Seventh Fleet, whose resources were much too inadequate for such a big show. These forces included cruisers, destroyers, and the older battleships for fire support; escort carriers; destroyers and destroyer escorts for convoy screening; troop transports and practically the entire amphibious craft then available in the Pacific Fleet. Most of these craft belonged to the Third Amphibious Force whose commander, Vice Admiral Theodore S. Wilkinson, Jr., became deputy commander of the Seventh Fleet when he joined up with Admiral Kinkaid.

After the capture of Leyte the Pacific Fleet units stayed on with the Seventh Fleet. They were not scheduled to return till after the invasion of Luzon.

Planning was done in close interservice unison at Hollandia, where both MacArthur and Kinkaid had their headquarters. Most of the top Army and Navy commanders were nearby within conferencing distance.

As at Leyte the amphibious forces were divided into two groups: one under Vice Admiral Wilkinson and one under Vice Admiral Dan E. Barbey, whose Seventh Amphibious Force had been hauling MacArthur's troops ever since the General started his march—or, to be more exact, his amphibious hops—up the New Guinea coast. Then there was the Bombardment and Fire Support Group commanded by Vice Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, who had won the smashing victory of Surigao Strait. Rear Admiral Russell S. Berkey, whose ships had protected many a Southwest Pacific landing, had a Close Covering Group of cruisers and destroyers. The Escort Carrier Group that was to fly cover for the convoys and then

give direct support to the troops ashore was commanded by Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin. Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly, on loan from Nimitz, had the Reinforcement Group, and Rear Admiral Robert O. Glover bossed the Service Group as he had at Leyte. Not counting small craft, Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet consisted of over 685 ships, including 6 "old" battleships (designated as such to distinguish them from their fast new sisters in the Third Fleet but still far from decrepit), 10 cruisers, 18 escort carriers, and approximately 165 destroyer-type vessels.

The beaches selected for the landing strung over most of the south and southeast shores of Lingayen Gulf. Wilkinson's group was to land the XIV Corps (Major General Oscar W. Griswold) opposite the town of Lingayen while farther to the east Barbey was to land the I Corps (Major General Innis P. Swift) on both sides of the town of San Fabian.¹

4

A few days before the scheduled getting underway, Admiral Oldendorf and his portly, outspoken chief of staff, Commodore Richard W. Bates, flew to Leyte to confer with Admiral Kinkaid, who had by this time moved up permanently from Hollandia. Communications with the guerrillas on Luzon was more difficult than with the guerrillas of the Central Philippines, so intelligence reports were often incomplete and sometimes conflicting, and Oldendorf wanted to hear and discuss every scrap of information.

Plans called for him to take his heavy ships into Lingayen Gulf three days before the landing and to sweep the gulf and the approaches for mines.

"If the intelligence reports that I have seen are true," spoke up Commodore Bates, "it's just plain suicide. They tell me the entire shore up there is rimmed with heavy guns."

"That's not so," replied Captain Arthur H. McCollum, Kinkaid's intelligence officer. "We have been evaluating all reports from the area and, on the contrary, believe Lingayen is lightly defended."

¹ For the assault the XIV Corps contained the 40th Division (Maj. Gen. Rapp Brush) on the right and the 37th Division (Maj. Gen. Robert S. Beightler) on the left. The I Corps contained the 6th Division (Maj. Gen. Edwin D. Patrick) on the right and the 43rd Division (Maj. Gen. Leonard F. Wing) on the left. In reserve would be the 25th Division (Maj. Gen. Charles Mullins, Jr.), the 158th Regimental Combat Team (Brig. Gen. Hanford MacNider), the 13th Armored Group (Col. Marcus E. Jones), and the 6th Ranger Battalion (Lt. Col. Henry A. Mucci).

McCollum went on to say that he thought that the greater danger would be from mines, not guns.

Okay, that was that, then.

Next there was the question of the Kamikazes. They were sure to come, and ships were sure to be hit. One officer asked, a bit apprehensively, how much damage the task group was to discount before turning back.

Kinkaid looked at the officer and said calmly, "We are going to Lingayen Gulf."

There was no question of turning back.

5

The loading of troops for the Lingayen operation took place far from the Philippines, in places that had once known the full fury of the war but which now were already beginning to relapse into their jungle oblivion. In New Guinea, Hollandia, Aitape, and Sansapor, Admiral Barbey's force took aboard the two assault divisions of the I Corps. At Bougainville, the northernmost of the Solomons, and at Cape Gloucester, western tip of New Britain, Rear Admiral Wilkinson's force picked up the two divisions of the XIV Corps. Lingayen was a long way away. From Hollandia, by the route finally chosen, it was exactly 2,150 miles, about the distance from New York to Panama. After much consultation it had finally been decided to take the convoys to Lingayen by the Navy's preferred route, through Surigao Strait and into the Mindanao Sea, thence north across the Sulu Sea, through the straits west of Mindoro into the China Sea, and north up the western shore of Luzon into Lingayen Gulf. For a while there had been much discussion about routing the convoys up the east side of the Philippines and around the northern tip of Luzon, then south to Lingayen. In fact as a preliminary to the main Lingayen operation the Army planned to take Aparri, on the northern end of the island, in order to give land-based air protection to this route. The shortest route to Lingayen on the chart would have been through narrow San Bernardino Strait, but easily mined and exposed to air attacks from Luzon. The northern route would not only have been exposed to air attacks from both Luzon and Formosa, and from Japan itself, but also to the heavy Gobi-bred storms that whistle through the gap between the Philippines and Japan like steam through a safety valve.

Both amphibious forces conducted practice landings before shoving off for the big show. Part of Barbey's group was put through its paces at Sansapor, on the western "head" of dragon-shaped New Guinea, while the rest rehearsed at Aitape, halfway down the north coast. Wilkinson had his warmup in almost-forgotten Huon Gulf, near Lae. He then took his ships to the ample anchorage at Manus in the Admiralties.

6

Now hundreds of ships from all over the Western Pacific were converging on Leyte, as 1944 merged into 1945. Barbey's amphibious force had shoved off in two sections, one from Sansapor and one from Aitape, and both had joined at sea. Wilkinson's force departed Manus in two sections, first the slower LSTs and landing craft, whose trip to Lingayen would take 12½ days, and then the transports. Oldendorf's heavy bombardment ships left Kossol Passage, Palau Islands, at dawn on New Year's Day. All was planned to mesh and integrate with a skill to make a Swiss watchmaker envious.

In Leyte Gulf itself the tough little ships that were to spearhead the whole operation headed down Surigao Strait on January 2. They were Commander Wayne R. Loud's Minesweeping and Hydrographic Group. Besides the 65 minesweeps there were also a few supply-laden landing craft, oilers, ammunition ships, salvage tugs, and of course an escort screen.

At dusk, as the minesweepers were heading southwest into the Mindanao Sea, three Jap bombers flew over, lobbed their bombs and retired, harmless and unharmed.

Next morning the first Kamikaze of the operation appeared. Out of a group of eight flying high, a Val suddenly plummeted toward the oiler COWANESQUE. The time was 0724.

Only a part of the plane hit, but enough to kill two sailors and wound several others. Amidst the plane wreckage a Japanese map was found showing the position of the group and a notation as to where it would be at 1:20 P.M. Another attack was therefore to be expected on schedule. The only thing shot that afternoon, however, was the nerves of the men watching for the raid that didn't happen.

One other ship was damaged in the morning raid, the minesweeper YMS 53, who took a near miss.

At noon the next day the oilers and ammunition ships in the Minesweeping Group broke off from the convoy and headed in to Mindoro. No sooner had they dropped anchor off the beach than a Val screamed out of the clouds straight toward the SS LOUIS DYCHE, an ammunition ship. There was no doubt about it: this one was a Kamikaze, with a purpose.

Before a man could cry "Look!" an orange inferno billowed skyward. Air, sea, and the trees ashore shook beneath the blast. For a short time a white cloud hung over the anchorage. Then it lifted. Nothing was left of the LOUIS DYCHE.

Meanwhile Oldendorf's ships, up from Palau, had Leyte on the starboard beam. Combatant ships that had been doing sentry duty there latched on to the formation, which was split into two sections of six escort carriers each and an equal proportion of heavy ships and screen. The plan was to trail about 30 miles behind the Minesweeping Group to Lingayen, where these two groups would arrive three days before the amphibious forces to sweep the mines and pulverize shore defenses.

The fourth day of January was growing dim as the ships lumbered through the north Sulu Sea just west of Panay. Suddenly the escort carrier OMMANEY BAY (Captain Howard L. Young) lurched to port, flames enveloping her starboard. No one on the carrier had seen the Kamikaze coming in. A few ships saw the plane as it dived out of the sun in time to send up a few shots, but they had not been able to shout a warning to the fleet. A long routine transmission was jamming the TBS frequency.

The OMMANEY BAY rocked under internal explosions and writhed in flame until sunset. The fires raged out of control. Reluctantly the ship was abandoned. Then, a few minutes later, the entire force was silhouetted by the bright flash as a single torpedo from the destroyer BURNS (Commander Jacob T. Bullen, Jr.) finished the work the Japs had begun.

Ninety-three of the carrier's crew had been killed and 65 wounded.

The ships continued north into the night.

7

Next day, January 5, the Japanese turned loose the full fury of their Kamikazes. Twice in the morning groups of enemy planes tried to get through to the ships of the two advance groups but an alert Combat Air Patrol of escort carrier planes turned both raids back. By this time both

the minesweepers and Oldendorf's heavy ships had passed through Mindoro Strait and were to seaward west of Manila Bay.

(Up to now the Japanese had thought the ships were going only to Mindoro. After they passed that island by and continued north, many Japanese believed a landing would be attempted in the Manila Bay area.)

Two Japanese destroyers were sighted nosing around ahead of the forward group of minesweepers about 1600 that afternoon. The destroyer BENNION (Commander Robert H. Holmes) and two Australian corvettes, HMAS GASCOYNE (Lieutenant E. J. Peel, RAN) and HMAS WARRINGO (Lieutenant C. A. Byrne, RANVR) gave chase. But Jap destroyers are fast, and Manila Bay was close by. The BENNION, after pursuing the Japs at top speed for thirty minutes and after erupting as much lead as her bow guns could throw, had to give up the chase. Rather, she turned the chase over to the carrier planes, who continued to plaster the Japanese with bomb and bullet, leaving one destroyer dead in the water and the other circling slowly, 20 miles southwest of the entrance to Manila Bay.

While this was going on, two dozen planes came roaring out from Luzon, less than a hundred miles away. This raid got through. In they came, strafing and crashing. Some zoomed so low their props cut wakes in the water, some came dropping from a height of four miles.

One of the Japs headed for the cruiser LOUISVILLE, Admiral Oldendorf's old flagship during the Battle of Surigao Strait and now flying Rear Admiral Theodore E. Chandler's flag. The Nip, masking himself behind a screening destroyer, dived within 3,000 yards of "Lady Lou" before the ship's gunners could open fire. The port guns spit momentarily but it was too late. The plane merely wavered, a few flames trickling out of the fuselage, and kept plunging toward the ship. The whine of its motor became a roar, reaching its zenith with a terrific explosion, as the plane crashed into turret No. 2, ripping the gun compartment open and sending a hell of flame and shell fragments up through the superstructure to the main battery director at the foretop.

Miraculously enough only one man—besides the well-guiding but misdirected son of Nippon—was killed, but 58 were painfully wounded. Among these was the ship's skipper, Captain Rex L. Hicks, who insisted on directing the damage control before allowing himself to be relieved by his executive officer, Commander William P. McCarty.

A few moments later the next wave of suicide planes picked out two Australian ships as targets. One crashed close aboard the seasoned Aussie

destroyer ARUNTA (Commander A. E. Buchanan, RAN), and simultaneously a Jill (Navy torpedo plane), after doing a wingover, plunged into the center funnel of the veteran Australian cruiser AUSTRALIA (Captain J. M. Armstrong, RAN) killing 25 and wounding 30. The AUSTRALIA had taken the first Kamikaze of the war at Leyte Gulf. Now she had taken another. It was far from being her last.

Three ships were already damaged, and still the Japs came on. The destroyer escort STAFFORD (Lieutenant Commander Volney H. Craig, Jr.) was crashed and had to be taken in tow. The escort carrier SAVO ISLAND (Captain Clarence E. Ekstrom) took one high on the mast and had her radar clipped off. Two Zekes dived toward the MANILA BAY. Captain Fitzhugh Lee, her skipper, tells the story:

"Both Jap planes were beautifully handled. They came in low at high speed, weaving slightly, and strafing during the approach. When about 1,000 yards from the ship they pulled into sharp climbing turns, turned over almost on their backs, then straightened out and dove straight into the ship from an altitude of about 800 feet.

"Zeke No. 1 hit the flight deck at the base of the island structure, penetrating the gallery deck and exploding in the radio compartments. Fragments splattered through the hanger deck, which was packed with planes being gassed and armed for an attack on the two Jap destroyers being chased by BENNION. Two torpedo planes parked farthest forward burst into flames, but these fires were quickly smothered. The explosion resulted in 15 dead or missing and 51 wounded. The pilot of Zeke No. 1 was thoughtful enough to leave his calling card. From the wreckage were recovered the pilot's wallet containing photographs and cards, a small notebook containing compass compensation formulae, and a silk Japanese flag.

"Zeke No. 2 came in about 15 seconds after Zeke No. 1 and used similar tactics. This pilot may have been wounded by the heavy anti-aircraft fire or he may have been blinded by the forward 24-inch searchlight which we tried to shine in his eyes, but at any rate he failed in his mission. As he flew past the bridge, his wings perpendicular and the cockpit inboard, one wing hit the starboard yardarm and caused the plane to crash in the water about 40 feet from the ship's side. Although his bomb exploded in the water close aboard, it caused only superficial damage."

"Manila Maru," pride of the Kaiser Navy, was soon brought under full control and was ready for limited air operations within 24 hours.

Ironic, maybe, that MANILA BAY should have been damaged so close

to the spot for which she was named. And prophetic, maybe, that two bomb-laden Kamikazes could not even cripple the American carrier.

For two and a half hours the Nips rained in on Oldendorf's group. The last ship to be crashed was the destroyer *HELM* (Commander Selby K. Santmyers), which was screening the CVEs. At the last moment the pilot lost control, did a low wingover, clipped off the mast and searchlight, and crashed into the sea.

At the same time the Minesweeping Group, 40 miles ahead, was also being attacked. One plane crashed alongside the 185-foot sweeper *SCRIMMAGE* (Lieutenant Robert Van Winkle). Three minutes later another crashed near *ORCA* (Commander Everett Rigsbee), a seaplane tender. Then another splashed close aboard the fleet tug *APACHE* (Lieutenant C. S. Horner). One plane smashed into the LCI(G) 70 (Lieutenant (jg) Robert E. Van Fossan), killing two men, knocking eight over the side, and wounding a dozen.

The rain of death had begun.

8

On December 30 the horizon-filling Third Fleet sortied from Ulithi, looking much like the fleet that had sortied from the same harbor many times before. But a group of men on the carrier *ESSEX* was certain that the Third Fleet was more powerful now than she had ever been before. They were Marines and their reason: Marine fliers, two fighter squadrons of them, had come to the fleet to fly their gull-winged Corsairs from the deck of *ESSEX*.

"You guys can relax now," drawled a Marine to his Navy shipmate. "We'll take care of those Kamikaze boys."

It was the first time Marine fliers had operated from the fast carriers since December 4, 1941, when *SARATOGA* delivered twelve Marine-piloted fighters to Wake in anticipation of the historic defense of that little island. At Attu a half dozen Marines had flown from an escort carrier in support of the Army landing. The Marines had now returned to shipboard life because Navy fighter replacements were inadequate, especially as the ratio of fighters to bombers on the carriers had been increased.

The Japanese were expected to throw everything they had left against the Luzon landings—the 400-odd planes they hoarded in the Philippines, mostly based on Luzon, and the equal number in Formosa and the Nansei

Shoto chain. Several of the Japanese warships that had escaped the Battle for Leyte Gulf were believed located in the Camranh Bay area, French Indo-China, 600 miles southwest of Luzon. The two hermaphrodite ships ISE and HYUGA were the ones Halsey particularly had his eye on—or hoped to clap eyes on. They had slipped away from him once during that great battle off the Philippines, and he wanted nothing better than to get them within range of NEW JERSEY's main batteries. They were two of the most powerful ships the Japs had left afloat and made a night raid on the Lingayen landing beaches a distinct possibility, although lack of air cover would probably prevent them from closing during the day.

On January 2, after fueling from Captain Acuff's ubiquitous oilers, Task Force 38 began its high-speed run in toward Formosa. One of the destroyers from Acuff's group (TG 30.8), HOBBY (Commander George Washington Pressey), split off from the rest of the force and headed for Luzon making radio noises like a whole carrier task force in order to hoodwink the Japs.

Next morning, when the task force arrived at the launching position, it ran into the first of the almost continuous bad weather that was to hamper its air attacks during the rest of the month.

A heavy front lay between the carriers and Formosa and many pilots on the predawn launch had to bore their way to the big tea island through almost solid weather, with bottom at a few hundred feet and top at 20,000. The intention was to "blanket" the Formosa fields in the same way the Luzon fields had been blanketed the month before, but fog and rain made it impossible.

During the strikes the Japanese tried to locate the task force by masquerading over the voice radio as lost U.S. fighters and requesting vectors to the carriers. Nobody was fooled by high-pitched voices complaining "Herro, herro? Prease where are you? This is me, very damn yosted."

By afternoon the weather was so bad that the remaining strikes had to be canceled.

For some time Halsey's pet project had been to take the Third Fleet into the South China Sea and sever the last thinly stretched Japanese sea routes to the south. Halsey thought that under favorable conditions and with "suitable hocus-pocus" he could get into the South China sea without being detected. Nimitz had tentatively approved the plans provided suitable enemy fleet units could be found in the South China Sea, so Halsey now requested that every effort be made by submarines and land-

based air to locate the ISE and HYUGA force, known to be somewhere in southern waters.

Preparing for the worst in case he was given permission to sweep the South China Sea, Halsey ordered two fleet tugs, JICARILLA (Lieutenant Commander William B. Coats) and MATACO (Lieutenant August B. Billig), to Leyte from Ulithi to stand by in case any "necessity for towing services developed."

The next day's strike against Formosa was much the same as the first. Reinforced monsoon weather had set in. Fliers had a rough time of it from the minute their wheels left the deck until they landed and came to a bouncing, skidding stop. Much of the time the weather was so thick that instrument flights were necessary, and often after a grueling, rain-soaked flight it was found that the targets were closed in. In spite of this the attacks were pressed through.

During the two-day strike only 30 Japs were destroyed in the air, but 81 more were caught on the ground. Shipping concentrations at Keelung and Takao on the west coast of Formosa were tempting and were rapped at repeatedly—sunk were 9 freighters, an oiler, 4 escort vessels, and 28 luggers. Eighteen American planes were lost in combat and 14 operationally. The weather had been as stern a foe as the Japanese.

January 5 was fueling day for the fleet. It was also the day ENTERPRISE with her night-fighter groups aboard joined up with the task force. For the first time in carrier history a night carrier task group, consisting of ENTERPRISE, the light carrier INDEPENDENCE, and the destroyers MCCORD, HAZELWOOD, HAGGARD, FRANKS, TRATHEN, BUCHANAN, was formed. It was given the designation TG 38.5; its commander, Rear Admiral Matthias B. Gardner in ENTERPRISE. At night this group operated separately but during the day it operated with Bogan's carrier group.

In preparation for a possible dash into the China Sea, Halsey directed Captain Acuff to form a fast oiler group, for everywhere the Third Fleet went the oilers were sure to follow. The group consisted of 6 oilers, 2 escort carriers, and 8 destroyers.¹

¹ Oilers: NATAHALA (Capt. Palmer M. Gunnell), NECHES (Comdr. Hedley G. Hansen), AUCILLA (Lt. Comdr. Charles L. Coyer, Jr.), TALUGA (Lt. Comdr. Hans M. Mikkelsen), GUADALUPE (Comdr. Charles A. Boddy), CIMARRON (Lt. Comdr. Henry G. Schnaars, Jr.). Escort Carriers: NEHENTA BAY (Capt. Edward O. McDonnell), RUDYERD BAY (Capt. Curtis J. Smiley). Destroyers: WELLES (Lt. Comdr. John S. Slaughter), THATCHER (Comdr. William A. Cockell), HAILEY (Comdr. Parke H. Brady), DYSON (Comdr. Laurence E. Ruff), FARRAGUT (Lt. Comdr. Charles C. Hartigan), MAC DONOUGH (Lt. Comdr. Burton H. Shupper), THORN (Lt. Comdr. Frederick H. Schneider, Jr.).

entrance to the gulf. Rear Admiral George L. Weyler took his section ¹ of 3 old battleships, 3 cruisers, and 7 destroyers to the eastern shore and blasted at Japanese positions near the little village of San Fernando, which is slightly north of the entrance to the gulf. Some feeble return fire from a few Jap shore batteries was quickly squelched.

Admiral Oldendorf took the other section ² of 3 old battleships, 3 cruisers, and 11 destroyers to the western side of the entrance to the gulf and there cut loose at Santiago Island.

The pilot in the spotter plane from CALIFORNIA, Oldendorf's flagship, reported a bit later: "If there are any military installations in our area, they're well camouflaged. I've been flying over the island at 1,500 feet and haven't found a thing."

So the firing was knocked off.

A little before four that afternoon the minesweepers reported a strange thing—they had encountered no moored mines in the entire gulf. Only two "floaters" had been spotted and these had been promptly sunk.

But where were the minefields that had been reported? Oldendorf's principal reason for coming to the gulf three days ahead of time was to clear these mines out of the way. And now it seemed there were no mines!

But if there were no mines, and little or no shore batteries, there were certainly Kamikazes aplenty.

¹ Battleships: NEW MEXICO (F) (Capt. Robert W. Fleming), MISSISSIPPI (Capt. Herman U. Redfield), WEST VIRGINIA (Capt. Herbert V. Wiley). Cruisers: Commodore H. B. Farncombe, RAN, HMAS AUSTRALIA (F) (Capt. J. M. Armstrong, RAN), HMAS SHROPSHIRE (Capt. C. A. G. Nichols, RN), MINNEAPOLIS (Capt. Harry B. Slocum); Destroyer Squadron 60: Capt. William Freseman, BARTON (Comdr. Edwin B. Dexter), WALKER (Comdr. George Fleming Davis), LAFFEY (Comdr. Fred J. Becton), O'BRIEN (Comdr. William W. Outerbridge), LOWRY (Comdr. Edwin S. Miller), ALLEN M. SUMNER (Comdr. Norman J. Sampson), MOALE (Comdr. Walter M. Foster), INGRAHAM (Comdr. John F. Harper, Jr.).

² Battleships: CALIFORNIA (Capt. Samuel B. Brewer), PENNSYLVANIA (Capt. Charles F. Martin), COLORADO (Capt. Walter S. Macaulay); Cruisers: Rear Adm. Theodore E. Chandler, LOUISVILLE (Capt. Rex L. Hicks), PORTLAND (Capt. Thomas G. W. Settle), COLUMBIA (Capt. Maurice E. Curtis). Destroyers: Capt. Roland N. Smoot, LEUTZE (Comdr. Berton A. Robbins, Jr.), NEWCOMB (Comdr. Ira E. McMillan), BENNING (Comdr. Robert H. Holmes), HEYWOOD L. EDWARDS (Comdr. Albert L. Shepherd), RICHARD P. LEARY (Comdr. Duncan P. Dixon, Jr.), BRYANT (Comdr. Paul L. High), IZARD (Comdr. Martin J. Conley), WILLIAM D. PORTER (Comdr. Charles M. Keyes), KIMBERLEY (Comdr. James D. Whitfield, Jr.), HMAS ARUNTA (Comdr. A. E. Buchanan, RAN), HMAS WARRAMUNGA (Lt. Comdr. J. M. Alliston, RN).

At fifteen minutes before midday lookouts on the destroyer *WALKE*, which was with the group near San Fernando, saw four shining specks in the sky. Harmless looking, but wait! They grew larger, closer, and menacing. All doubt was quickly erased. They were Oscars (Jap Army fighters) and deadly intent on crashing the destroyer.

The *WALKE*'s guns promptly knocked down the first plane. The second seemed just about to be getting through when the pilot must have been killed, for this fighter performed some unorthodox acrobatics and plummeted into the sea.

All that to starboard, and most eyes turned right. But a third now, and the men who had had to keep their backs turned on the interesting business on the opposite side of the ship almost welcomed it. Every gun on the left let loose, but incredibly to the sweating, swearing, praying gunners the Kamikaze came through unscathed and crashed into the destroyer's bridge.

The *WALKE*'s captain, Commander George Fleming Davis, was enveloped in flames and surrounded by dead. John T. Hoops, Y1/c, who was nearby and uninjured, suffered second-degree burns beating out the flames around his skipper. Hands and face burned to a skin-cracking crisp, his eyes swollen so men wondered if he could see, Davis insisted on staying on the bridge to help fight the fires and direct steering control to the after part of the ship.

Not until the fires were brought under control and he was assured the last Kamikaze was destroyed would Davis turn the ship over to his executive officer, Lieutenant John S. Burns. Then he went below, and died.

The Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded posthumously to Commander Davis for staying at his battle station though mortally wounded.

In the same group the *ALLEN M. SUMNER*, one of the destroyers that had distinguished themselves at Ormoc, was attacked by three planes. Two were driven away but the persistent third dived through the rigging and crashed into the after torpedo mount. The *LOWRY*, too, was crashed but with only minor damage.

In Oldendorf's group the destroyer *RICHARD P. LEARY* had her fore-castle nicked off by a twin-engined suicider. The *NEWCOMB* was strafed and took a suicider close aboard.

The minesweepers also had been having their share. The high-speed minesweeper LONG (Lieutenant Stanley Caplan)—an old converted four-pipe destroyer—took a couple close aboard and HOPKINS (Lieutenant Darrel P. Payne), another of the same class, took one. The destroyer transport BROOKS (Lieutenant Sidney C. Rasmussen, Jr.) was put out of action by a direct hit aft from a flaming suicider.

Then the "divine winds" shifted and blew toward the heavy ships. Normally a suicide plane bounced off a battleship without causing too much damage, but not so with NEW MEXICO, nicknamed the "Queen" because of her extraordinary peacetime battle efficiency.

As a bridge talker screamed into his phone "We're hit!" a suicider crashed into the "Queen's" navigation bridge, demolishing it and knocking out all voice communications. Rear Admiral Ingram C. Sowell in WEST VIRGINIA was directed by Admiral Weyler to take command of his bombardment group until his flagship's communications could be restored.

With her commanding officer, Captain Robert Walton Fleming, dead, NEW MEXICO, screened by the destroyer LAFFEY, fell out of the battle line. Lieutenant General Herbert Lumsden, British Royal Marines; Sub Lieutenant Bryan S. Morton, Royal Navy; *Time* magazine's William H. Chickering, and 26 officers and men of the ship's crew were killed in the single explosion. Eighty-seven were wounded.

Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser was staggered by the same bomb that killed Bill Chickering and General Lumsden. Fraser, Commander in Chief of the British Pacific Fleet which was to begin operating shortly against the Japanese, had accompanied the invasion troops to, in his own words, "get experience in the work in this part of the world."

After the explosion an aide frantically rushed to the British Admiral and inquired, "Do you feel all right, sir?"

"Yes, of course," replied Sir Bruce, "except for a slight ringing in the ears."

Although hit, NEW MEXICO, under guidance of her new skipper, Commander John T. Warren, successfully repelled a second attack which developed ten minutes later.

Throughout the day the sky was filled with dirty black puffs of smoke from antiaircraft bursts, making early detection of threatening planes even more difficult.

At 1435 an enemy plane splashed off the bow of the cruiser PORTLAND and one minute later O'BRIEN, the fourth ship of DesRon 60 to be hit

during the day, was crashed along the waterline aft, flooding the crew's after living spaces.

II

By midafternoon, after streaming paravanes, the handy little devices designed to cut mines free of their moorings, the heavy ships formed up in column to enter Lingayen Gulf. Oldendorf had been told that no moored mines were present and that only a few floaters might be found but one wouldn't take chances. The plan now called for a half-hour bombardment of the landing beaches at the southern end of the gulf.

But between the plan and its execution there is many a slip.

Sight of the long strip of floating steel would have struck terror in the heart of an inferior naval force, but to the Japanese suicide pilot—it was just to his liking.

With the ships in column the suicide pilot could approach from either end, fly alongside the column and "hashi-krashi" into the ship of his choice without facing the umbrella of flak from a beam approach.

Nosing her bow into a moderately rolling northerly swell the old "Prune Barge" CALIFORNIA steamed first in column. Then came PENNSYLVANIA, COLORADO, COLUMBIA, PORTLAND, LOUISVILLE, HMAS AUSTRALIA, HMAS SHROPSHIRE, MINNEAPOLIS, MISSISSIPPI, NEW MEXICO, and WEST VIRGINIA, flanked on both sides by sharp-nosed tin cans. It was one of those impressive recruiting poster sights; a force of warships pushing into confined enemy waters with flags flying.

Plowing ahead in the light breeze, the men topside took in the entire sight, the high mountain range to port, the impossible-looking cone-shaped hills to starboard, and dead ahead the great plain. In the distance the dark-blue water gradually became lighter until it shone a bright green close to shore. Without a break, the light green of the water blended with the darker green of the jungle, the whole framed against pastel shades of the sky. Overhead, pure-white clouds leisurely drifted. It was just a pretty picture, and it had no right to be.

The feeling that something big was about to happen permeated the ships. Only the churning of the propellers and the throaty rumble of moving gun mounts, ordinarily imperceptible background sound, broke the deadly silence.

Would there be any "Come Crazys" this afternoon? If so, would there

be any shore bombardment? Would big Jap shore batteries open up as they had on Saipan and Tinian, to open holes in the steel hulls?

No sooner had the ships lined out into column than a radio message was beamed from one of CALIFORNIA's spotting plane pilots. "Looks like a Jap plane coming over the island; now he's low over the water and streaking toward the formation."

Such was the tally-ho for the Battle for Lingayen Gulf. This first plane was visually spotted by ship's lookouts and promptly shot down.

"Thanks for reporting that plane. We got him," radioed CALIFORNIA's skipper, Captain Samuel B. Brewer, to his "bug" pilot. "Let us know if any more are coming our way."

The battle opened slowly. No bogies around, the heavy ships made preparation to blast the beaches. Suddenly a shockingly big raid was spotted by the CAP coming from inland Luzon. Escort carrier pilots, summoned from cracker-box flight decks to the northwestward of the gulf's entrance, met the attack head on. But there just weren't enough planes to do the job.

The first Nip to arrive, a stubby-nosed Zeke 52, newest Navy fighter, picked up the row of ships from astern and defiantly sped on a course parallel to the column. The Zeke was shot at by every ship. The guns swung with the plane as it came streaking by, and then the guns of the next ship ahead would pass it along. Reaching the end of the column unhurt, the pilot went into a showy climbing turn to the left and then headed directly for the lead ship CALIFORNIA. Plunging through smoke and tracers, he smashed in a violent cloud of billowing yellow flame against the battleship's after fire-control tower, killing or injuring most of the men within a 100-foot radius of the blast.

The plane's motor and a mass of debris showered over the port side into the water. Steel fragments from the explosion tore hunks out of decks 35 feet below, smashed into splinter shields, and tore a sizable chunk out of the ship's bell. The whole antiaircraft control, known as Sky Aft, was set ablaze with burning gasoline. Only the crazy, maddening blare of the cease-firing claxons that had been shorted out at their control switches could be heard after the crash. The men fighting fires and rescuing wounded didn't seem to talk; their lips just moved and the claxons went on and on.

"Cut the sonsabitches off," yelled someone.

"What say? I can't hear you."

The fire fighter dropped the job in hand to claw a wire loose and there was silence. Then other sounds became audible as shocked ears recovered, but still some men remained dazed, milling about aimlessly. One man broke out a fire hose on the quarterdeck and just stood with a blank stare, not moving. Someone took it away from him and put it into play; he didn't move. Another dazed man lying on the quarterdeck, his badly torn leg twisted in an unnatural position, conversationally and wonderingly asked repairmen as they passed in their feverish work if they thought he would lose his leg.

Looking down from the bridge you could see the dead at their gun stations. The 20mms had their cradle bolts loosened and those guns where men had died pointed skyward with the gunners in their harnesses holding the barrels vertical like so many grave markers. Overtones could be heard of the steady sputtering of the water from fire hoses on the hot steel of the superstructure and the decks below.

The "Old Prune Barge" had been painfully hit. Men with shrapnel wounds, burns, shocks, fractures, and hysteria poured into the battle dressing stations. The first man to reach battle dressing station opened the door, staggered in and said, "Well, here I am," and died. His right arm was torn off at the shoulder, and he died from shock.

To make bad matters worse, in the heat of battle a 5-inch shell from a friendly destroyer smashed into one of CALIFORNIA's antiaircraft guns bringing the battleship's dead to 48 in less than a minute.

It would be impossible to describe all the scenes about the CALIFORNIA, or any other ship, when she has been hit by a Kamikaze. One must have lived all of it to understand fully what it means to be steaming along with flags flying and majestic white clouds piled around the horizon against a brilliant, peaceful blue sky when suddenly there is a terrific roar of guns and a crash and a shudder and one looks around to see a shipmate hanging in a gun harness with his back broken and his torso so contorted that his head is on the deck between his feet. It's hard to walk where the wounded are, and it's hard to keep balance on a blood-slippery deck.

But this was only the beginning of the battle. More and more planes started on their one-way mission. Bogies poked their noses through the bursting ack-ack while the ship's helpless "landlocked" radars feebly probed for planes coming in over the hills. Unless the men could visually spot the planes in time for the gunners to get on target, the only hope was that the pilot would miss.

But on January 6 the pilot's aim was good.

"We knew in advance that Jap air would be tough," said Commodore Bates, "but we didn't think it would be that tough.

"We couldn't allow the Japs to think for one minute that their suicide attacks had killed so many men and damaged so many ships. Therefore, we had to stay and take it. Every ship hit fought until she was no longer maneuverable—we couldn't let the Japs know."

After CALIFORNIA was hit the tempo of the attack mounted.

With all ships firing, the sky in a matter of seconds became a billowing cloud of smoke, flying steel, and flaming planes. The very defenses against the Kamikazes helped conceal them.

The next "meatball," a brown Army Tony, a fighter much resembling the U.S. P-40, streaked down at about a 60-degree dive on the port quarter of COLUMBIA, the last ship in column. A yellow flame flickered along the fuselage but the suicider wasn't stopped. The plane passed between the foremast and mainmast, ripping down radio and radar antennas before crashing into the water abreast the bridge. But this was only the first hit for COLUMBIA.

For the next few minutes deafening explosions in Lingayen Gulf shook the sea with machine-gun rapidity. Muzzle blasts from sizzling gun barrels, bombs detonating as they crashed against the steel hull of ships or set off as they plunged harmlessly into the water, gasoline tanks bursting into reddish-orange balls in mid-air, ships shuddering from violent magazine eruptions converted peaceful Lingayen Gulf into a zone of total war, a new version of total war at sea—ships versus suicide planes. How much could Oldendorf take? How long could he take it?

In the next few maddening moments five ships were seriously damaged: SOUTHARD (Lieutenant Commander John E. Brennan), a destroyer minesweep, was hit for the first time, COLUMBIA, LOUISVILLE, LONG, and HMAS AUSTRALIA the second time. Lingayen Gulf became a holocaust of twisted steel, twisted bodies, and twisted minds.

The HMAS AUSTRALIA radioed that she was still able to "carry on" although 40 more casualties had been added to the list, 14 of them dead. The COLUMBIA, hit the second time by a bomb-laden plane, keeled over crazily and started circling. Serious fires burned on the main and second decks; turrets Nos. 3 and 4, their magazines flooded with fuel oil and sea water, were out of commission, and 20 of her crew were killed.

The LONG's story is told by her commanding officer, Lieutenant

Stanley Caplan: "Just prior to the plane hitting the ship I noticed that the pilot nosed over pulling out at about 25 feet and plunged right into the waterline of our ship. The crash caused a terrific jolt knocking me off my feet but there was no explosion. Flames leapt over the bridge and we thought our No. 1 magazine would explode.

"Standing in the starboard galley deckhouse passageway when the ship was hit was Chief Watertender Joseph N. Chamberlin. He was a big man, about six feet two, and weighed over 200 pounds. Although burned very badly he maintained his position in the passageway so that the older men could get out without being scorched. Later Chief Chamberlin, his back, arms, and face scorched black, attempted to fight the fire by running out the fire hose.

"Chamberlin was taken aboard HOVEY, another destroyer mine-sweeper, where he was put on a cot and treated for his wounds. When HOVEY was sunk a few hours later (she was hit during the darkness of early morning by an aerial torpedo, and went down in three minutes), Chamberlin, although too ill to swim, managed to get into the water. Lieutenant Ben N. Cole, skipper of HOVEY, assisted the Chief over to a lifeboat, but was unable to coax him aboard until all the other men nearby in the water had been picked up.

"Six men were killed on the LONG and two died later from injuries received in action. One of them was Joseph N. Chamberlin, Chief Watertender, USN."

Three Kamikazes closed on LOUISVILLE's starboard bow. With the assistance of PORTLAND, who was steaming dead ahead, she had been able to eliminate two of them. The third, flying low over the water, continued to press the attack. The pilot seemed as unswervable as an 8-inch salvo about to hit its mark. Gun crews shrieked curses of hatred and fear as the plane came onward through their steady rain of bullets. Finally, a 20mm gunner got him 50 yards from the ship.

Named for the great racing city, LOUISVILLE, since commissioning day, had carried on a prominent bulkhead a shoe of the great stallion Man o' War, as a talisman against evil. If Man o' War's shoe could help, now was the time. The battle against the single plane had been so desperate that few had noticed a Val coming in at intense speed from the starboard quarter. Guns swung to fire on him, but this time to no avail. In a matter of seconds the plane had crashed into the signal bridge, piling its motor and fuselage into No. 1 stack. One of its bombs exploded above a 40mm gun, killing all of the crew that had fired on the plane; the other bomb

exploded at the height of the open bridge just outside the Captain's sea cabin, hurling white-hot shrapnel in all directions.

As fire leapt over the signal and open bridges, dazed men still on their feet instinctively manned fire-fighting equipment. Admiral Chandler, though critically burned, helped hold one of the hoses to fight the searing blaze until he was taken below by one of his staff.

The LOUISVILLE's bridge was temporarily knocked out and Lieutenant Clarence E. Soderstrom, assistant navigator, coolly and skillfully conned the ship for an emergency station. The entire foremast was engulfed in flames. The starboard side became the funeral pyre of the men whose battle station had been in the area of the hit. Persistently, relentlessly, damage-control parties fought to save the ship, to beat back the inferno that crept nearer and nearer to the ship's magazines. In the after half of the ship, gunners, choking and gasping for air as the thick smoke, stinking of burned flesh and paint, enveloped them, stood their ground feeding the 20s and 40s, blazing away at two more suiciders.

High in the superstructure of "Lady Lou's" main battery fire control station, men wondered if they were trapped. On his knees, one of them prayed aloud. On the open bridge, an officer who had miraculously escaped injury, screamed in crazed, instinctive reflex, "Who's fighting this ship? Fire those guns!"

Broken, burned, blackened bodies pulled themselves from the flames over fire hoses and through stinging salt water along the buckled and torn decks to the arms of those who mercifully injected morphine.

Gradually the fire on "Lady Lou" was brought under control and the ghastly business of cleaning up began.

Admiral Chandler, wreathed in gauze and grease, liquid trickling into his mouth by tube, called for a guest, Frank L. Kluckhohn, reporter for the *New York Times*.

"Are you all right?" he first asked Kluckhohn. He went on talking, almost apologetically. "We have to pay a price for big gains," he finished. "My grandfather was a secretary of the navy; my father was an admiral. I had their traditions."

With Captain Hicks painfully burned, with more than 125 men swathed in bandages, and overflowing the sick bay into neighboring sleeping compartments, the "Lady Lou," for the first time in her history, was unable to complete a task begun. She was ordered to safer waters where she could have the protection of the escort carriers steaming outside the gulf.

For the first time—and last, though there was worse to come—in World War II, a heavy bombardment force found the enemy opposition too hot to handle. At Cherbourg, France, the destroyers had been forced to scamper away from German shore batteries but the heavy ships stood off at a greater distance and pounded the beach defenders into submission. This time it wasn't coastal guns, but aerial banzai! At 6:00 P.M. Oldendorf called off the bombardment and ordered his ships out of Lingayen.

12

A cloud of lead-colored smoke hung over Oldendorf's ships as they slid through the heavy swells of Lingayen Gulf—outward bound. Oldendorf stood on CALIFORNIA's flag bridge, eying his damaged warriors through the smoke and haze.

It had truly been a day of hell. If the next day was as bad—well, there wouldn't be much left of his ships.

He dictated an urgent call for help to his boss, Admiral Kinkaid:

"Consider need of additional air power urgent and vital. Our CVEs entirely inadequate providing air cover. Japanese suicide dive bombers seem able attack without much interference owing to radar difficulties. . . . Believe in addition that all fields small as well as large near Lingayen area must be continuously bombed and maintained neutralized. Enemy attacks heaviest morning and evening especially around 5:00 P.M. Additional damage might seriously and adversely effect this as well as important subsequent operations. More damage may invite action with the Japanese Fleet for which this Command is becoming progressively less prepared. Should suicide bombers attack transports, results might be disastrous. Recommend Fifth Air Force be informed of the seriousness of the situation and need of more air support. Recommend Third Fleet be ordered to this area immediately to provide additional air and surface cover urgently needed. Consider this matter of such serious importance as to warrant immediate reconsiderations of present plans."

Kinkaid, aboard his flagship WASATCH, read Oldendorf's sober message. It was worse than he had expected, 21 ships hit in 25 hours. The escort carrier coverage was obviously inadequate. There was only one solution: help from Halsey.

Kinkaid sent an urgent message: "Our ships have been strongly attacked in Lingayen Gulf . . ."

13

By eight o'clock darkness had set on Oldendorf's force. The stars were out and the moon was a slight crescent. The day was nearly over. As men were relieved from general quarters most of them went to their bunks and just sat down to think and to thank God that "today has finally ended."

For the doctors on the damaged ships there was no rest. When the last patients had been taken care of, they turned their attention to the dead. Each body was identified if possible and prepared for burial. Sailmakers stitched for hours making canvas coffins for dead shipmates. The chaplains prepared their burial services for the morrow.

14

Halsey had planned to strike Formosa again on January 7, and the fast carriers had already begun their run in toward the battered island when he received Kinkaid's dispatch requesting a repeat performance on Luzon instead.

The "Bull," whose plans were always flexible, came about and once more sent his fliers against Luzon. The weather remained foul but the fliers went in, nevertheless, all knowing that their comrades of the Seventh Fleet depended on them to sweep the air clean of Kamikazes. Many of the men in the Third Fleet knew from firsthand experience that it was no fun having streaks of whining death fall at one from the sky, sending a paralyzing flash of fear through the whole body, pulling stomach taut and nauseous, throbbing the blood faster through one's head and labored heart. Release came only after the shattering crash when one found himself either alive and thankful or—dead.

Task Force 38, in spite of the weather, succeeded in smothering the Jap air effort in Luzon. But the cost was high—higher than any single day's operation in two months: 28 planes, 18 of which were lost operationally. The Jap losses were greater: 4 in the air and 75 on the ground.

While that was going on, Oldendorf's bombardment ships re-entered the gulf to continue the work they were forced to lay down the evening before. By 1030 the landing areas were being shelled. There were no Kamikazes to be seen.

Outside Lingayen Gulf LOUISVILLE, her ensign at half-mast, buried the dead—a ceremony which by this time had become commonplace in Lingayen.

The chaplain on "Lady Lou," Lieutenant (jg) Henry C. Schadebers, stood on the well deck for the simple, but impressive burial. There were no caissons, no muffled drum, no black drapes or stately procession. Only the silence of the sea with its waves slapping against the ship's side, the drone of fighter planes shuttling to and from their carriers and the distant mutter of guns from Oldendorf's ships. This was the real thing: the men present were truly close friends of those who had gone; no sight-seers, just flag-draped litters with a chaplain in a khaki uniform with a helmet close by.

"Present arms!"

The slap of rifle butts, by the honor guard, the rustle of freshly starched khaki, the grim expression of the men marked the execution of the salute to the dead.

Uncovered, with bowed heads, those present strained to catch the padre's words. In the distance, intermittent rumblings of guns provided the organ music.

". . . may the Lord lift up the light of His countenance, and bring them peace." With an opened prayer book in the palms of his hands, his eyes lifted, the chaplain concluded the service.

Again the subdued command, "Half Right. . . . Face!"

With neat precision the seven-man Marine guard wheeled 45 degrees to the right.

"Ready—Aim—Fire!"

In sequence, the guard raised rifles to shoulders, aimed skyward, and fired three sharp salvos.

The grave sustained tones of taps rang out in parting tribute. As the bugle notes faded, "Lady Lou" committed the bodies of her fallen ship-mates to the deep waters of the South China Sea. Among them was Ted Chandler, Rear Admiral, USN.

That afternoon the Underwater Demolition Teams swam into the beaches and reported back that no beach defenses or underwater obstacles were to be found. At 1730, about an hour before sunset, the bombard-

ment ships retired to the northwestward of the gulf for the night. The day had passed without a single Kamikaze.

One sinking, however, marred a perfect score. The destroyer minesweeper PALMER (Lieutenant William E. McGuirk, Jr.) was sunk by two bombs in a conventional attack.

From this date on, the Japanese were able to put only token raids into the air over the gulf. The Americans had won the Battle of the Kamikaze, at least in the Philippines. Suiciders continued to appear in twos and threes over Lingayen Gulf, but they could have—and had—no effect on the invasion. And what Oldendorf's ships had absorbed, the crowded transports would consequently not have to take. For each bluejacket killed, a score or more soldiers would live.

Next day, January 8, Oldendorf's ships were again inside the gulf, bombarding the beaches of Lingayen and San Fabian where the next day the two Army Corps would go ashore. The airport adjacent to Lingayen also had to be smashed.

A pilot in a spotter plane reported no visible signs of enemy installations below, but very queer doings in the village.

"They seem to be having some kind of parade. I'm going downstairs to look."

As the starred plane swung low over Lingayen Town, the paraders didn't scatter. They waved flags—the sun-crested banner of the Philippines and, resurrected from Lord knows what hiding places, the Stars and Stripes.

By the time the pilot could circle for another look, the Filipinos had completed a message spelled out with strips of cloth on the ground.

"Don't shoot—No Japs here."

The pilot reported the plea. On the flagship Oldendorf held hurried consultation. The decision: Don't take chances.

Another plane sped out toward the village, carrying a batch of hastily prepared leaflets.

"Clear area."

The villagers were to have time to remove themselves to safety, but time so short that any enemy who might have forced them to act as decoys would not be able to pack up his guns. That also meant the Filipinos would have no time to pack up their household gear.

In ten minutes the villagers had fled their homes, and the great guns resumed the easy task of blasting them to bits.

There were no Japanese in Lingayen Town.

That day the scarred Aussie cruiser AUSTRALIA took her third and, a few minutes later, her fourth Kamikaze. The Kamikaze pilots had orders to attack transports and perhaps they mistook the AUSTRALIA for one. She had many of the characteristics—high freeboard, triple stacks, several lifeboats. At any rate it was difficult for her crew to understand how she could be hit so often while other ships got off without a scratch.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Amphibs Move In

I

WHILE THE GREAT BATTLE between ship and Kamikaze was being fought in the Lingayen area, the amphibious forces steamed stolidly through the Philippines on the convoy route blazed by Oldendorf's ships.

Admiral Barbey's group, which passed through Leyte Gulf the evening of January 4, came first. It was an armada, extending over 40 miles from van to rear; far cry from the pocketful of ships that had been the Seventh Amphibious Force a year before.

Out in front of the main formation by a good 10 miles were the three cruisers and six destroyers of Admiral Berkeley's Close Covering Group. One of the cruisers was the *BOISE* (Captain Willard M. Downes) and aboard her was the big boss of the Southwest Pacific Area, Douglas MacArthur.

The main body consisted of great columns of transports, cargo vessels, LSDs (Landing Ships Dock, which carried amphibious landing craft in their bellies and would disgorge them by flooding), LCIs equipped as rocket boats and smokers, LSTs—those amphibious truck horses, a couple of tankers, an ammunition ship, and a net cargo ship. Surrounding this apparent hodgepodge of vessels were the screening escorts. Directly astern were two escort carriers, *KADASHAN BAY* and *MARCUS ISLAND*, which clamped a protective cover over the convoy and sent out long-winged fingers in search of prowling submarines. From the airplanes one could see, coming up astern, the first of Vice Admiral Wilkinson's amphibious force, a landing craft convoy of 148 slower ships.

2

Barbey's convoy sailed through a morning of quietness in the Mindanao Sea—no suiciders, no mines, no submarines. It seemed like the good

old pre-Kamikaze days when resistance was not expected before arriving at the objective area.

But that afternoon a TBS message suddenly broke the drowsy silence:

"Torpedoes off our starboard bow headed toward formation!" It was from the destroyer NICHOLAS (Commander Robert T. S. Keith) which was part of Admiral Berkey's leading group.

"Torpedoes sighted dead ahead!" confirmed Commander Nicholas J. Frank, Jr., from the bridge of his destroyer, the TAYLOR. He had sighted the bubbling wakes of two torpedoes dead ahead of NICHOLAS and on the starboard bow of the cruiser PHOENIX.

"Torpedoes on course south headed for BOISE!" radioed PHOENIX (Captain Jack H. Duncan).

"All ships emergency turn 45 degrees starboard," blared the orders from Admiral Berkey.

On BOISE the helmsman spun the wheel hard to starboard as Captain Downes ordered flank speed. The torpedoes streaked by close as frolicking porpoises, surfaced in the middle of the convoy to float for a minute as if frustrated, and then sank.

If the torpedoes had found their mark it would have been the second time in as many operations that the enemy had hit the one ship carrying the top personnel. When NASHVILLE had been hit by a Kamikaze en route to Mindoro, it will be recalled, she had been carrying Admiral Struble and General Dunckel. It was too much of a coincidence to be wholly luck.

The NICHOLAS and TAYLOR were ordered to get the sub.

"Submarine surfacing dead astern!" shouted two of TAYLOR's look-outs, Wallace Walter Knox, GM 2/c, and George Bolin Badget, Jr., S 2/c, almost in unison.

"Emergency flank speed. Right full rudder."

The destroyer's nose slowly began to rise out of the water as it turned toward the broaching submarine.

At this point a torpedo plane that was on antisubmarine patrol from one of the escort carriers dived on the submarine and dropped a depth bomb which fell about 50 yards from the submarine, a little less than a mile from TAYLOR. Commander Frank, radioing to the plane to stand clear, charged down on the sub. It was now seen to be one of the midgets, about 60 feet long and 6 feet wide, and evidently hurt, for its bow angled 30 degrees out of the water.

The TAYLOR sliced into the greenish-black hull amidships. It split like a sardine can under a hatchet blow and instantly sank.

The next two days passed without major mishap. A couple of more torpedo wakes were sighted near the LSTs but this time the midget was not found. A group of about a dozen enemy planes blindly groped the sky over the ships at night. They could not find the convoy, which, simulating Br'er Rabbit, lay low and said nothin' with its AA fire.

By dusk of January 7 the ships had passed into the China Sea. A shabby welcoming committee of three Jap planes lurched out of the darkening northeast. Two were shot down; one managed to crash the LST 912, but the damage was minor and the ship continued in formation.

That clear and pleasantly warm night the great convoy was due to pass the entrance to Manila Bay. Admiral Barbey, figuring that the Japanese might sortie to attack the convoy with a fast surface force, placed his destroyers to intercept any adventurous enemy.

As Barbey suspected, about 10:00 P.M. a "skunk" was picked up on the radar speeding toward the convoy. The four destroyers¹ that were protecting the convoy from that direction illuminated with star shells. It was a lone destroyer, bravely charging into overwhelming odds.

On the bridge of CHARLES AUSBURNE looking through his long glass was Chief Signalman Frank S. Wright, Jr. He described what he saw:

"I remember shouting 'There's that so-and-so, now let's see you hit him.' All of our ships seemed to be firing over the Jap ship while he straddled us with gunfire. Most of the signalmen were wet with spray from the Jap can's near misses."

Salvos from CHARLES AUSBURNE began to connect and the enemy destroyer, making a tight turn to withdraw, slowed down. Flashes of dark and sooty red blossomed from the stricken ship and low, rumbling explosions rolled over the dark water to tell of bursting boilers and exploding magazines.

"As the ship went down," continued Wright, "I could see sailors running up and down the decks through my long glass and I saw one gunner, who as the ship sank changed three complete magazines on his gun. He was firing an elevation of about 80 degrees, which is practically straight

¹ CHARLES AUSBURNE (Lt. Comdr. Howard W. Baker), BRAINE (Comdr. William W. Fitch), SHAW (Lt. Comdr. Victor B. Graff), and RUSSELL (Lt. Comdr. John E. Wicks, Jr.).

up. He didn't know what he was firing at, but he was doing his job and it struck me that the Japs also had some determined men in their naval forces."

Save for that lone destroyer, reckless or gallant or Kamikaze-minded, the Japanese fleet offered only aerial opposition to the convoy.

For the remainder of the night it was continually snooped by enemy planes, of which four were splashed by protecting night fighters. Several times Berkey's forward group opened fire as flares were dropped in their vicinity, making the sailors feel as conspicuous as bathing beauties—and devoutly praying that they would stay as dry too. For there was going to be trouble, sure as shooting, when the sun came up.

At dawn the attack came. The planes seemed to concentrate on the two escort carriers, KADASHAN BAY (Captain Robert N. Hunter) and MARCUS ISLAND (Captain Charles F. Greber). For an hour the combat air patrol (CAP) kept the enemy swarm stingless, shooting down six of the attackers. Then a lone Zeke ducked under the defense and sprinted for the carriers. The bomb intended for MARCUS missed, but before it hit the water the Zeke was already turning toward KADASHAN BAY.

Under fire from all the ships of the group, the plane began to waver, but with flames and smoke gushing from its body it came on through the wall of fire and crashed the KADASHAN BAY as the jeep carrier dodged desperately. A thick cloud of dark smoke mixed with flames signaled the convoy that the Kamikaze had avenged the Japanese submarine and destroyer.

But not quite! Although KADASHAN BAY was flooding and five feet down by the bow, she maintained station in the convoy. With her stability growing critical, however, and her gasoline system knocked out, all of her planes then in the air were sent to the MARCUS ISLAND.

Repair parties succeeded in plugging the 15-foot hole ripped in the thin-skinned hull near the waterline, and in drying out the gasoline pump room whose fumes made the whole ship a potential bomb from a chance spark. The wounded carrier cruised in the Lingayen Gulf area for three days, until the first convoy returning to Leyte was made up.

During the excitement of the dive on the two carriers, a second Zeke slipped under the convoy's guard and shattered into the bridge of the transport CALLAWAY (Captain Donald C. McNeil). Personnel loss was high—30 killed and 20 wounded—but the ship continued as guide in her formation.

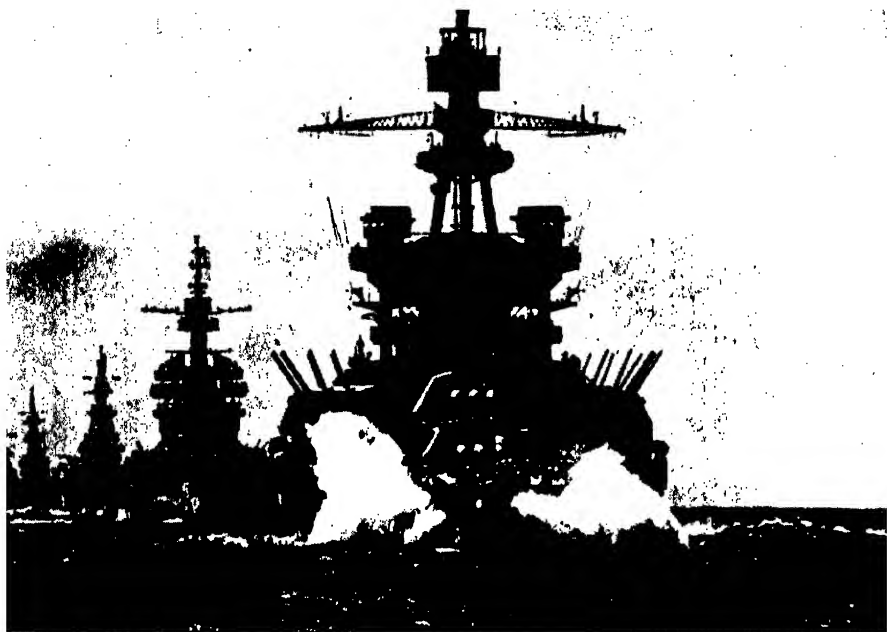
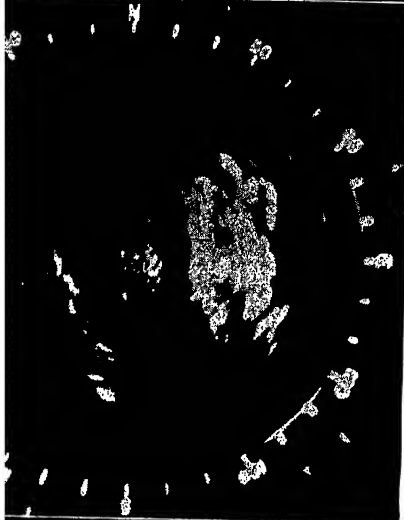


PLATE XVII—The Seventh Fleet displays its might. Sometimes called “MacArthur's Navy,” because it was attached to his Southwest Pacific command, this powerful force spearheaded the Allied attack all the way north from New Guinea to the Philippines. Some of its veteran battle-ships and cruisers (*above*) had been “sunk” at Pearl Harbor. Included in this big armada were many Coast Guard-manned LSTs (*below*) here shown headed for Lingayen Gulf, and the initial landings on Luzon, main island of the Philippines. (*Coast Guard Photo.*)





PLATE XVIII—Radar, the silent weapon, "lighted the road" to Tokyo. Here is a scene (*upper*) that few Navy men witnessed during the war—the highly restricted radar plot room, where figures and information supplied by the electronic eye of radar were translated into the proximity of enemy or friendly planes, ships, and shorelines. This photograph, taken aboard an Essex-class carrier, shows actual operations in the China Sea, December 1944.



(*center*) Not ectoplasm, but a radar-eye view of a battle. This photograph of a ship's PPI scope was made during the invasion of Lingayen Gulf, January 1945. The cluster of white dots in the center represent warships of the bombardment group; the large white mass, the coast and highlands of Luzon; behind the attack flotilla (*lower left*) transports and other ships throw light pips on the scope.

(*lower*) Heroine of this picture, the USS COLUMBIA, is hidden in the heavy smoke at the left. The veteran cruiser's radio antenna has just been hit by a Kamikaze, which crashed in the water close aboard. But neither this, nor two bomb hits, prevented her from giving close-in bombardment support of landing forces at Lingayen Gulf, January 9, 1945. Destroyers (*right and center*) throw up a furious antiaircraft screen.

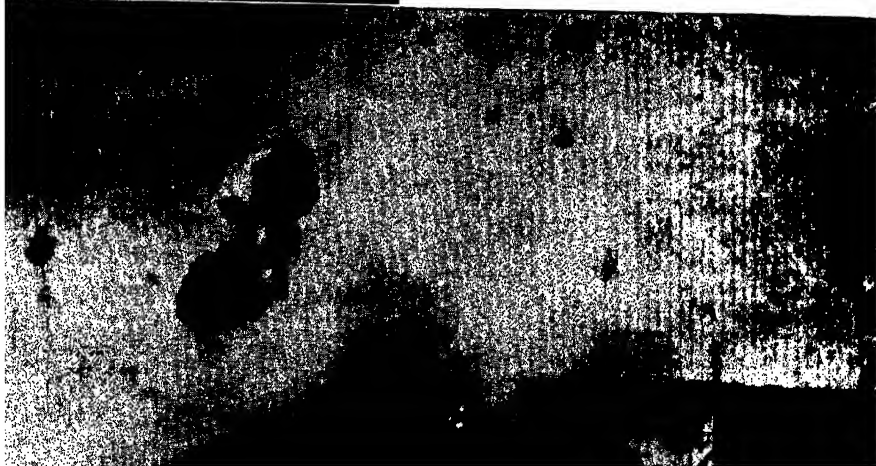


PLATE XIX—"Landing craft aweigh" at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, January 9, 1945. While the bombardment group pounded the Japanese-held shore line, these landing craft, like trained polliwogs, circled the transports, loading assault troops (*upper*). The XIV Corps went ashore at Lingayen: the I Corps at San Fabian. (*Coast Guard Photo.*)

(*center*) Naval leaders of the first Luzon landings. (*left to right*) Vice Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, commander heavy bombardment group; Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, commander Luzon attack forces; Rear Admiral T. E. Chandler (killed in the attack), commander cruiser division; Rear Admiral Russell S. Berkey, commander close covering group, and Commodore V. H. Schaeffer, chief of staff to Admiral Kinkaid. The photograph was taken on the bridge of Admiral Kinkaid's flagship, the *WASATCH*, shortly before the Lingayen assault.

(*lower*) Army tanks, rolling up the Lingayen beach met no opposition, but a plume of smoke (*left center*) indicates where a landing craft took a direct hit from Japanese mortar fire. Although nothing like the "hot reception" promised by Tokyo Rose, enemy shelling in the late afternoon became so heavy that some LSTs were pulled off the beach for three hours. (*Coast Guard Photo.*)

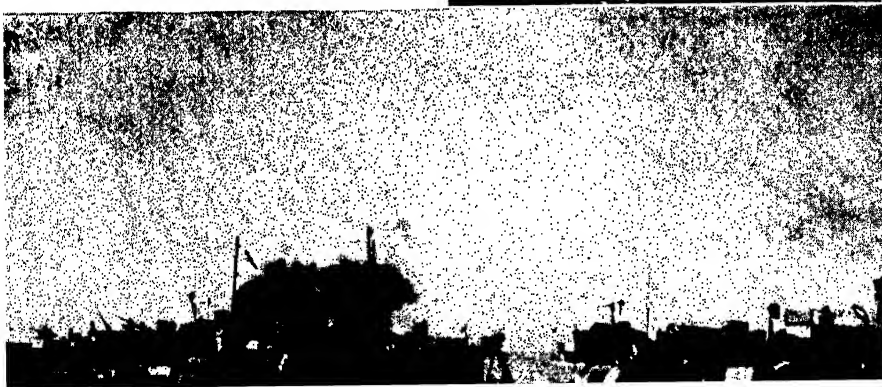




PLATE XX—Prevailing winds favored the Lingayen attack forces. This aerial photo (*upper*) shows how the Allied landing craft slipped in behind a protecting curtain of smoke resulting from the bombardment forces' devastating barrage of shells and rockets.

(*center*) A head-on view of the first three waves of landing craft approaching the Lingayen beachhead. Navy air and surface bombardment canceled out Japanese opposition and drove the enemy to the hills. Here, at the head of the great central plain, began the march on Manila.



(*lower*) Jubilant Filipinos rush out of hiding to welcome the first American liberators at Lingayen, January 9, 1945. Allied forces quickly pegged down an area four miles deep. The first beach casualty came when an American soldier was butted by an angry carabao, apparently infuriated at having its siesta disturbed. (*Coast Guard Photo.*)

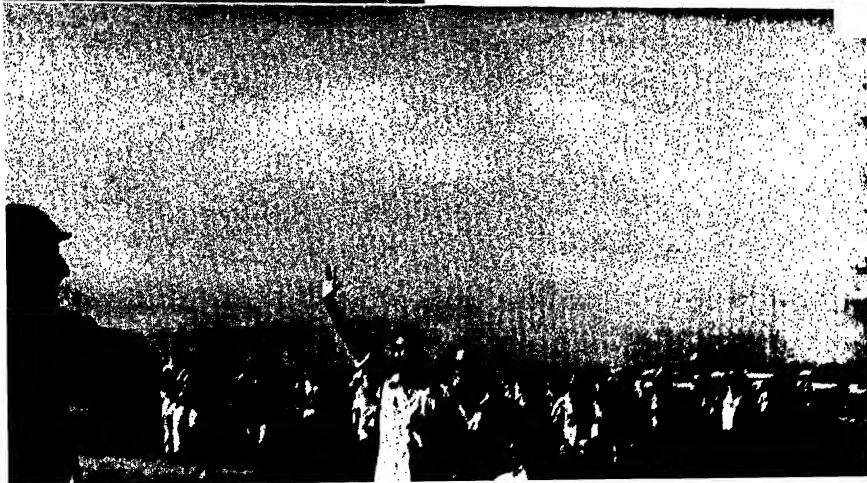


PLATE XXI—One excuse for overstaying leave that was accepted! (*upper*). Estaneklas Bandong, officer's steward 2/c, escapes all punishment when he explains to Captain M. Downes (*left*), skipper of the USS Boise, and the executive officer, Commander Ewart I. Eves, that he had difficulty in returning to his ship for three years owing to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. He went on leave December 4, 1941, and his first chance to return to duty came January 11, 1945!



(*center*) Survivors of the minesweepers LONG and HOVEY, sunk during the fierce Japanese aerial attacks on the Lingayen attack force January 6, await transfer to the USS CALIFORNIA. Many are suffering from severe wounds and burns.

(*lower*) American troops use the wreckage of a Japanese plane as a beachhead "checkroom" at Lingayen. This photograph gives an idea of the variety of landing craft employed: Landing Ship, Tank (*left background*); Landing Ship, Medium (*center background*); Landing Craft Vehicles Personnel (*right background*); Landing Craft Medium (*left foreground*) and Landing Craft Personnel, Light (*right foreground*). (*Coast Guard Photo.*)





PLATE XXII—The wheel of destiny turns a full circle! Almost tripping over his Samurai, exultant General Homma, commander of the Japanese Philippine Expeditionary Force, (*above*) steps ashore at Lingayen Gulf, December 24, 1941. Four years later, General MacArthur and his staff landed at almost the same spot (*below*). Accompanied by his Chief of Staff, Lt. General R. K. Sutherland (*left*) and his Aide, Colonel L. N. Lehrbas (*center*), MacArthur spurns the convenience of a Navy pontoon dock (*right background*) as he wades to the beach at noon of S-day, December 9, 1945.





PLATE XXIII—The long drive on Manila begins. (*above*) A Filipino woman scurries for shelter as American troops cautiously advance through a palm grove at the height of the first-day assault on the beaches of Luzon. (*below*) Sherman tanks advance as the Luzon campaign gets underway in earnest. From the hills, two divisions of well dug-in Japanese troops shelled the beaches, but failed to challenge American armor in the flat open country. By January 28 the XIV Corps had smashed its way into the Clark Field area, more than half way to Manila. (*Coast Guard Photos.*)



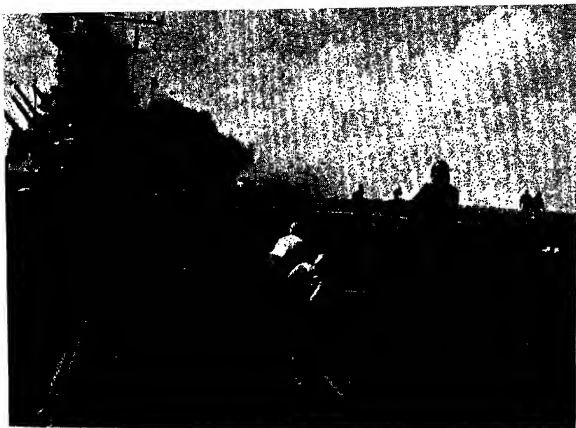


PLATE XXIV—The resiliency of Navy aircraft carriers, and their ability to weather battle or accident damage, are graphically portrayed in this series of photographs taken aboard the USS HANCOCK, during Pacific operations, January 21, 1945. A loose bomb in the bay of an Avenger torpedo plane armed itself and exploded after the plane landed.

(upper left) Dead and wounded litter the flight deck a few seconds after the blast, as fire-fighters rush hose lines to the flaming wreckage. The explosion hurled pieces of plane and shrapnel in all directions. (right) Corpsmen give first aid to a wounded comrade, whose right leg has been ripped open by flying shrapnel. They are wearing flash-burn protective gear.



(left) Reacting quickly after the mishap, crewmen, despite the intense heat, surround the flaming plane to pour smothering foam on the wreckage. The flames were soon under control.

PLATE XXV—(right) Wreckage litters the flight deck of the USS HANCOCK and pieces of the plane hang in the radio antennas shortly after the 500-pound bomb went off. Although the accident resembled in effect damage caused by the enemy, it came without the warning that usually precedes an enemy attack.



(left) Quickly the wounded are taken below, where prompt medical attention saved many lives. The man in the gun gallery (lower right) appears to be suffering from shock. The fire extinguished, the flight deck was soon repaired and normal flight operations restored.

(right) While comrades stand at silent salute, mass burial services are held from the hangar deck of the HANCOCK for the more than a score of victims of the unfortunate accident.

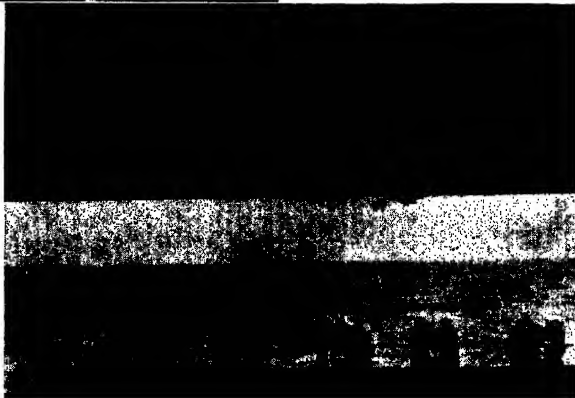




PLATE XXVI—(left) "The Rock" shudders. As a preliminary to the assault on Corregidor, Army Air Force B-24s smother the island fortress with heavy bombs. In the month preceding the assault, General Kenney's aircraft rained over 3,000 tons of explosives on The Rock while Admiral Barbey's cruisers and destroyers gouged its cliffs and cave entrances with shellfire. But the Japs hung on.

(right) Navy PTs and Army paratroopers in closely-coordinated attack. Like incongruous, predatory con-fetti, vari-colored chutes of the 503rd Infantry shower on Corregidor from waves of low-flying transports. Seventh Fleet PTs rescued chutists who missed the small target of the island's topside plateau. (Watercolor by Lt. Comdr. Dwight C. Shepler, Official Navy Combat Artist.)



(left) Strwn on the beach of Corregidor lie bodies of Japanese soldiers and sailors who attempted to infiltrate our forces. Nearly 6,000 Imperial troops lost their lives on Corregidor. American casualties were over a thousand, a third of them killed.

PLATE XXVII—(right) This courageous little minesweeper was busy clearing Manila's front door when Jap shore batteries opened up on her. Sailing out of range, she calmly waited until aerial and surface bombardment lessened the risk. Mined areas were divided into zones, and "being considered dangerous," were named after women! The worst was "Helen," north of Corregidor, where the YMS 48 was lost.



(left) The only naval casualty of the initial Bataan landing, February 15, was the LSM 169, here shown at the exact moment she struck a mine. The next night "Maru 4 boats" (Jap suicide launches) sank three LCSs, and forced the beaching of two others. Mariveles Town and airport were quickly seized, however, against light opposition.

(right) Still smoking amidships after receiving four direct hits from Japanese guns on Corregidor, the destroyer HOPEWELL needs no assistance from the cruiser PHOENIX, from which this photograph was taken. HOPEWELL was attempting to rescue survivors of YMS 48 when struck.





PLATE XXVIII—Behind the scenes in the Philippines bands of guerrillas waged relentless, unrelenting warfare on the Japanese for more than three years. (*upper*) Colonel Wendell W. Fertig, USA (*at left*) of Golden, Colorado, commanding officer of all guerrilla forces on Mindanao, and his Chief of Staff, Lt. Comdr. M. "Monty" Wheeler, USNR, of Hollywood, California.



(*center*) Lieutenant James E. McClure of Sheffield, Alabama, a member of a guerrilla band known to the Japanese as "The Scorpions." McClure joined the group after escaping from a penal colony at Davao, Mindanao.

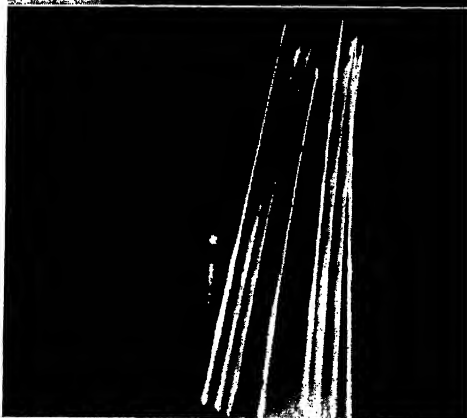


(*lower*) U.S. Navy submarines, landing craft and planes supplied Filipino guerrillas with arms, ammunition, food and uniforms. Here the Filipino, too, learns that there are only two sizes of the latter: too large and too small!

PLATE XXIX—(*upper*) American guerrillas from the Philippines leave an outrigger canoe for a Navy Catalina rescue plane. The group includes two downed Army airmen and nine members of a band that had terrorized the Japanese for nearly three years, and most of the men seem none the worse for their experiences in the jungles.

(*center*) A Navy landing craft, while moving to land Filipino guerrillas, fires a salvo of rockets at the Philippine town of Nasipit, Mindanao. The guerrillas soon drove the Japanese into the hills.

(*lower*) Equipped with American arms and ammunition Filipino guerrilla bands became effective fighting forces. This group not only has rifles and machine guns, but 60mm mortars as well. It operated on Mindanao, second largest of Philippine islands.



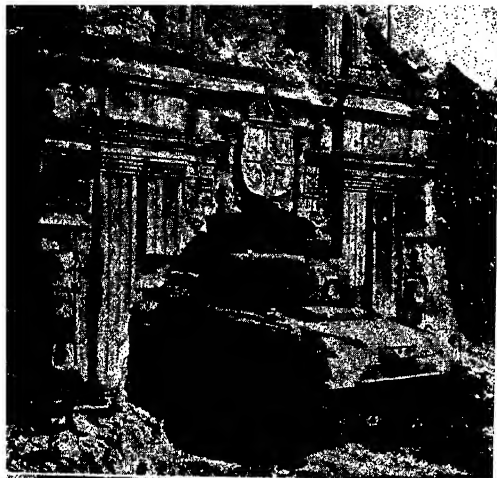


PLATE XXX—Manila falls! When Japanese suicide troops entrenched themselves behind the thick stone walls of Intramuros, the ancient Walled City of the Spaniards, U.S. tanks and artillery had to blast them out. Here (*upper*) a tank rumbles through an emblazoned gate whose beautiful carved stonework has been almost destroyed.



(*center*) Because the Japs blew all the bridges over the Pasig river, assault boats had to be used to attack the Walled City. These were soon replaced with pontoon bridges capable of carrying heavy equipment.

(*lower*) The abject misery of Allied prisoners in Manila is poignantly revealed in this painting of internees at San Tomas University. More than 3500 internees were freed from San Tomas, along with another 1000 prisoners of war and internees in old Bilibid Prison. (Watercolor by Lt. Edward Millman, Official U.S. Navy Combat Artist.)



PLATE XXXI—(upper) Her bandaged hands clasped in a prayer of thanksgiving, her burned and begrimed face alight with a smile, a Filipino nun walks away from the Walled City of Manila following her rescue by American soldiers. The nun and scores of other civilians had been held as hostages by the Japanese.

(center) Mopping up enemy snipers in the ruins of the Walled City was exciting, dangerous business. The photographer who took this picture was suddenly confronted by an armed Jap. Dropping his camera, he drew his revolver in true "frontier days" style, and shot the Nip dead.

(lower) Gunners aboard a Navy PT boat cover Army troops searching for hidden Japanese aboard the capsized MYOGI MARU, one of many Jap hulks in Manila Harbor. Loud speakers broadcast in Japanese offers of safety for surrender. These ships were sunk in Navy carrier plane raids, September and October 1944.





PLATE XXXII—(above) Chow, Army-style, on board LST 1035 en route to Cebu, island fabled in song for its virgins. (below) Troops landing at Cebu ran into the heaviest beach defenses encountered in the Philippines, and the first five waves ashore soon piled up on each other. Naval and air bombardment came to the rescue and the Japanese were pushed back to the hills. Cebu was an important objective. From it came many of the midget submarines that popped up in the middle of Allied convoys supplying our forces in the Philippines.



If the Japanese had figured on sinking a ship with each Kamikaze hit, they were rapidly being frustrated. Their score; two hits, no runs, ten errors.

3

Meanwhile Admiral Wilkinson's transport group passed through Leyte Gulf on the morning of January 6. At dawn it was joined by the Seventh Fleet flagship WASATCH, which carried both Admiral Kinkaid and General Krueger.

The passage to Lingayen was not very exciting. Once enemy planes ventured into the orbit of the CAP planes from the escort carriers KITKUN BAY (Captain Albert Handly) and SHAMROCK BAY (Captain Frank T. Ward, Jr.). They got no farther, and none got back. One the one night that radar contact was made with four unidentified planes, destroyers ran the length of the convoy to windward and laid smoke to blot out the silhouetting effect of the moon. No attack developed. On January 8—S-minus-1-day—the transports joined up with the amphibs near Lingayen, and by evening all elements of the huge attack force were poised off the gulf. Berkeley's cruisers mingled with the transports of Wilkinson's group to furnish fire protection if needed. The time was just about sunset.

"It was the most spectacular sight I saw in the Navy," one man said, "there were ships all over. MacArthur was on the ship right behind us. PTs were weaving back and forth carrying messages. It was beautiful."

Six Japs took it into their heads, however, to disrupt this model for a recruiting poster. The combat air patrol got four, one narrowly missed the Kamikaze-plagued HMAS AUSTRALIA—and the last ripped through a tightly-woven blanket of AA fire to crash KITKUN BAY amidships on the waterline.

The KITKUN BAY, however, continued to limp along and at sunset she and SHAMROCK BAY edged over to the left flank of the convoy and prepared to recover aircraft.

But just at this time a lone Jap, high in the sky, winged over and dived full power toward KITKUN BAY.

"The whole fleet started shooting at him," related one witness, "but he just came on in and crashed into KITKUN BAY. A message went out over the voice radio: 'Nest is hurt. Can you take over chickens?' Then all the planes started to land on the other carrier. There was just enough light

to see all this from our transport. Each time a plane landed a shout would go up. Some of them cracked up, of course."

The KITKUN BAY was definitely out of this scrap. She was towed by the fleet tug CHOWANOCK (Lieutenant Rodney F. Snipes) to Santiago Island at the entrance to Lingayen Gulf, designated anchorage for damaged ships. Toughly reversing the old order, she was out, but not down.

4

This the beginning of S-day at Lingayen, January 9, 1945.

Thick darkness on the water, pricked only by the light of the stars overhead. A cool predawn breeze skipped lightly across the ships. It was the hour made for deepest sleep.

But already ships were astir. From the galleys and mess halls came the rattle and scrape of metal trays. Breakfast was already over, the beans and bacon already eaten. Men were now at their guns yawning, stretching, scratching, rubbing bloodshot eyes. Gun covers were yanked off and the guns trained outboard. Ammunition lockers were thrown open. Men fumbled for the sound-powered headphones. Others gazed intently through binoculars into the darkness, toward the beaches. The men worked as phlegmatically as garbage collectors at their job.

Slowly the darkness gave way to cold ashen light. Above the haze low over the waters of the gulf the hills to the east loomed high in silhouette. Little landing craft, like so many trained polliwogs, began to circle their mother ships and edge into position for the run toward land, and abruptly all other sound was erased by the opening crash of the bombarding ships.

From BOISE's bridge General of the Army MacArthur looked toward the beaches. Soon his troops would be on them. Beyond lay the Central Luzon Plain, and, beyond that, the great prize Manila, only 100 miles away. The first ten miles would be tough going, lowland cut by sluggish serpentine streams. But then the soldiers would fan out on the plain, where they could maneuver as armies should and commence the quick slicing drive toward Manila.

On the bridge of WASATCH stood Admiral Kinkaid. He had been worried about the Lingayen operation all the way from Leyte. The long journey past enemy-held shores was accomplished at a tiny fraction of what it might have cost. His Seventh Fleet, larger than it had ever been

before, larger than it would ever be again. Slowly Kinkaid's gaze swept the fleet—from horizon to horizon. Suddenly his bushy eyebrows arched under the brim of his helmet. A giant rosette of flame blossomed evilly in the row of cruisers. The COLUMBIA had been hit by a Kamikaze, her third of the operation.

As the transports moved into the misty gulf a radio message had gone out saying that all planes in the vicinity were friendly. A few minutes later a plane had ducked in and dropped a bomb off the bow of the attack transport MONROVIA (Captain John D. Kelsey).

"What the hell is this?" a bewildered sailor exclaimed. "Friendly planes dropping friendly bombs?"

A short time later the destroyer escort HODGES (Lieutenant Commander John A. Gorham) was crashed.

5

The two attack forces of Kinkaid's fleet were drawn up off their respective beaches—Wilkinson's at Lingayen and Barbey's about seven miles to the eastward at San Fabian. Since thirty minutes before sunrise, which came about 0730 according to American watches, the bombardment ships had started slugging away at the beaches. Each landing area was being administered to by three old battleships, three cruisers, and about a score of destroyers. Now the bombardment was reaching its explosive climax. Cruisers, destroyers, battleships—all were firing, all were throwing "everything in the locker at the Japs except the spuds." Some walked their shells up and down roads and road junctions; some plowed the fields around Lingayen; some raked the heights near San Fabian; some shot at railroads, some at towns. None of it was haphazard. That none of it was needed was, despite the pleas of the Filipinos to Oldendorf, not to be taken for granted. Each ship had a specific job to do.

The assault waves formed up. Troop-laden amphibious tractors in long churning lines turned toward the smoking beaches. At San Fabian 81 LVTs from 6 LSTs carried 1,800 men in the initial assault. Ahead of the bouncing spawn of modern amphibious war moved the rocket-toting LCIs. As the assault waves approached, the bombardment from the sea was lifted to inland targets and to the flanks of the beaches. Then came the coup de grâce: a whistling barrage of 7,500 rockets from 15 LCIs.

From one of COLORADO's float planes came an eagerly awaited message: "Boys are on the beach. No opposition."

Then from the flagship WASATCH: "The first wave has landed!"

The time: 0930.

At the town of Lingayen the XIV Corps poured ashore, the 40th Division on the right and the 37th Division on the left. At San Fabian it was the I Corps, the 6th Division on the right and the 37th Division on the left.

From the sea the various Army commanders followed the operations ashore. They were aboard the flagships of their Navy counterparts. From Wilkinson's MOUNT OLYMPUS, Major General Griswold watched his XIV Corps hit the beach. From Barbey's BLUE RIDGE, Major General Swift kept his finger on the I Corps. And from Kinkaid's WASATCH, which had leisurely anchored that morning off Lingayen beaches, Lieutenant General Krueger directed the whole Sixth Army.

These flagships were a web of radio nets that reached out to everything Army or Navy—subordinate headquarters ashore, support aircraft, bombardment ships, landing craft control. Three separate situation maps with all the up-to-the-minute information of the progress of the invasion were maintained on WASATCH—one in the joint operations room, one in Krueger's office, and one on Kinkaid's bridge.

The situation maps drew a hopeful picture. There had been no opposition at the beaches and the troops quickly pegged down an area four miles deep. The first beach casualty came when a soldier was butted by an angry carabao.

In the Lingayen area the whistle of shell and the shudder of exploding bomb soon died out, for there were no Japs. Native Filipinos told how the Japs had fled three days before when Oldendorf first showed his teeth in the gulf. Now the bombardment ships rode quietly offshore with guns silent waiting for a request for shelling that never came. The invasion settled down to the backbreaking problem of landing heavy equipment and supplies from the ships offshore. Since the shoals prevented the LSTs from laying their noses on the beach, they had to be unloaded far offshore with the aid of pontoon causeways and landing craft. It was no easy job at best and a 4-foot surf made it a risky one.

To the northeast Barbey's beaches were better for unloading, in fact at some points the LSTs and the LSMs could make "dry ramp" landings. The enemy's co-operative noninterference was shattered half an hour

after the landings had begun. Japanese in the hills overlooking the unloading began to lob mortar shells into the beach area. Several LSMs were hit but only lightly damaged. Later in the afternoon shelling reached a point where it was necessary to pull the LSTs off the beaches for three hours.

All the day's resistance came from this section to the northeast of the San Fabian landing. But Shore Fire Patrol Parties were quick to whistle up hot bombardments from the ships standing by offshore. Aircraft from the escort carriers were called in to contribute their bombs and rockets. Rosario, a little town slightly inland and to the left of the beaches, seemed to be the nerve center of Jap resistance and was pounded mercilessly.

Each night for four days Japanese artillery opened on the San Fabian beaches for about a half an hour, between 2300 and midnight. But it was hardly enough to stop a determined invasion and certainly was remote from the "hottest reception in the history of warfare" promised by Tokyo Rose.

6

The Japanese airfields on southern Formosa were within 400 miles of the Lingayen landing beaches—definitely a threat to Kinkaid's amphibious fleet. Since these fields were out of range of MacArthur's land-based air, Halsey figured that he could best support the landings on S-day by striking at Formosa instead of giving direct support in the Lingayen region.

This he had done.

Again the weather had been bad—worse than the week before, if that was possible. Sweeps launched against Okinawa had run into heavy frontal weather and were turned back when icing conditions developed at 15,000 feet. Some of the strikes penetrated holes in the weather, however, and chalked up kills of 9 ships and 47 planes at Formosa. And no Formosa planes annoyed MacArthur.

7

The ships that remained in Lingayen Gulf were put to bed that first night under a blanket of smoke. Fifteen minutes before sunset all the

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transports and LSTs, as well as specially equipped LCIs and even little LCVPs, started fuming. Shortly after sunset, when the last aircraft had flown back to its carrier, a thick protective blanket lay over the transport area.

Protection against stray Kamikazes—yes. But this night the Japanese had a new hara-kiri instrument up their kimono sleeves.

The first part of the night passed quietly. Then, during those few hours that straddle dawn, so much happened so quickly in Wilkinson's area that it cannot be related chronologically. The battleship COLORADO (which had been accidentally hit earlier in the evening by an American shell) was lying to off the beaches waiting to furnish call fire to the troops ashore. She logged the main events:

0353—TBS transmission from an LST: "Any ship this circuit send small boats. We have been damaged by enemy torpedo boats and are taking on water." (It was the LST 925 and she had been attacked by three boats.)

0400—Received TBS report: "Task Force 77 being attacked by Jap PTs." Alerted antiaircraft batteries.

0415—Tracers streaking toward small boats from several ships. ROBINSON (DD), under attack by torpedo boats, and has been hit. LEUTZE (DD) under attack and got underway at 5 knots. (It was dangerous to go faster because of the number of ships anchored in the gulf. Also it was difficult to fire on the boats without hitting other ships.)

0429—Intercepted report that the transport WARHAWK had been torpedoed and the ship was being abandoned. (WARHAWK did not sink but she suffered 73 casualties.)

0430—LSTs 1025, 925, and 610 have been seriously damaged. LCIs 974 and 365 are being abandoned in a sinking condition. (All forces had by this time been alerted against attack by small boats, midget submarines and swimmers.)

0435—Reported that PHILIP (DD), after being hit, destroyed one suicide boat. The EATON (DD) sank another.

And then two and a half hours later the Japanese again fell from the sky:

0701—Nip suicide plane crashed close aboard LEUTZE.

0708—Many Jap planes in the air. One crashed north of COLORADO.

0710—DASHIELL (DD) had suicider crash close aboard. (The regular dawn smoke blanket had been laid over the transports, so the suiciders were going after the destroyers on the fringes.)

0731—Sunrise. "So ended a very unpleasant night."

8

The damage that night—and it was plenty—had been done by explosive-stuffed speedboats—and by swimmers!

At first detection taken to be survivors, the naked Japanese with demolition charges lashed to their muscular backs, by their actions identified themselves to aghast American eyes as human torpedoes. Ships forthwith sent out hunting parties in motor whaleboats in the weirdest naval combat of the war. The anachronistically named "whaleboats" functioned once more in the fashion of their prototypes, the prey now much more important than any spurting mammals of the deep.

Armed with knives, rifles, and machine guns, the American sailors acted in a manner befitting the heirs of New England harpooners, as a new assault by human torpedoes swept in on the morning tide. Suicide swimmers tried to hide behind floating debris—and there was a lot of it that hadn't been there at sundown. But high swells and a bright sun made them easy prey for the roaming hunters, racing like sharks through a school of mackerel. No human torpedo found a target. Quite the contrary! None survived.

A few survivors from the Japanese boats were picked up. They disclosed that six powerboats had left San Fernando at the mouth of the gulf on the eastern side—where the Japanese had expected the invasion—and then had crossed to the western side. From there they had attacked the transport area. The craft were about 20 feet long and 5 feet wide and could do about 15 or 20 knots. As weapons they used depth charges or hand-launched mines, but no torpedoes. The depth charges were carried slung over either side and could be released by ramming the bow of the boat into a ship or, preferably, by coming alongside a target at high speed, dropping the charges while executing a U turn, and then attempting a getaway.

9

Oldendorf's ships continued to be plagued by the final jabs of a dying air force.

Shortly after one o'clock on the afternoon of landing day *MISSISSIPPI* (Captain Herman J. Redfield) lay quiet off her assigned beaches. The troops ashore were not asking for any big-gun support. The crew lolled about, relaxing for the first time in days.

Suddenly from over the beach and out of the sun came a screaming Kamikaze. There had been no radar warning and the friendly planes overhead had not spotted him.

The alarm for general quarters blared frantically throughout the ship—but it was too late.

Brushing the bridge with one wing, the plane crashed among the AA guns on the crowded boat deck. Flames shot up. Captain Redfield, who from the wing of the bridge had watched the plane scrape by him, personally organized the fire fighting. Soon the fire was under control. Twenty-six dead and 63 wounded were removed below.

The MISSISSIPPI, far from being out of action, was to remain near the gulf for over a month longer.

At almost the same second MISSISSIPPI was hit, HMAS AUSTRALIA absorbed her fifth Kamikaze of the operation and lost her forward funnel but fortunately no men.

Late in the afternoon, the day after the landing, Oldendorf steamed out of the gulf with his six battleships, three cruisers, and two squadrons of destroyers for a rendezvous with the escort carriers to the northwest. Together with Admiral Berkey's cruisers and destroyers, they formed the Lingayen Defense Force, a sea barrier for MacArthur's troops against any Japanese surface force that might try to bottle up the counterinvasion—an admitted possibility.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Fleet That Swept the Sea

I

WITH THE SIXTH ARMY troops safely ashore at Lingayen and Jap air more or less safely neutralized on Luzon and Formosa, Halsey could turn his attention to his pet project, *Operation Gratitude*—the South China Sea sweep.

On January 8 reconnaissance aircraft reported sighting the big battle-ship-carriers *ISE* and *HYUGA* at Singapore. Next day sightings indicated the two had left Singapore, perhaps with the intention of attacking the Lingayen supply routes or the gulf itself. Halsey could protect the landing beaches by body-blocking these ships in the South China Sea itself.

Besides these two tempting morsels there were also concentrations of merchant tonnage at the principal ports and in convoy off the western coast line. The psychological effects of a sweep through Japan's one-time private preserve might be as valuable as the material destruction. It would show the Japanese that their southern empire had all but slipped from their weakened grasp. It would also upset them with the threat of amphibious landings on the China coast in the wake of the carrier raids.

The South China Sea, or Nan Hai in the indigenous tongue, is a long (1,200 miles) slot of water bounded on the south by the Dutch island of Sumatra and the Malay peninsula and plugged at the north by Formosa. The eastern side of the slot is formed by oil-rich Borneo, stringy Palawan, and Luzon. Six hundred miles across to the west lies the serpentine coast of Indo-China and China; along this shore line were many fine harbors through which the Japanese drained the treasures from the south—Singapore at the tail end of Malaya, Saigon, and Camranh Bay in Indo-China; and Hong Kong and Swatow just west of Formosa.

Never since the early days of the war had the South China Sea been challenged by Allied surface craft, although from the first, submarines had been slashing at the life lines of empire that ran its length from Japan to Indonesia.

To enter or leave this restricted sea, the Third Fleet had three possible choices—the strait between Formosa and Luzon or the southern routes through the inland waters of the Philippines via San Bernardino or Surigao Strait. If the latter routes were chosen, the element of surprise would be lost, for the Japanese still held many observation posts throughout the Philippines, and the movements of the fleet were sure to be reported.

So Halsey decided to run the gantlet between Formosa and Luzon.

On the night of January 9–10 the Third Fleet, after feinting a retirement to the east, dashed westward at high speed for Luzon Strait. Task Force 38 transited Bashi Channel to the northward, near Formosa, while Captain Acuff's fast oiler groups (6 tankers, 2 escort carriers, 3 destroyers) slipped through Balintang Channel farther south. With the seas ahead swept by four destroyers, the three carrier groups went through one, two, three: Radford's 38.1 in the van as guide, Bogan's 38.2 in the center, and Sherman's 38.3 trailing.¹

The Japanese didn't have a clue as to what was happening. Not only did they not attack the Third Fleet, they did not even discover it: this despite the fact that for 16 hours the 99 ships, spread over 30 miles of ocean, were within 100 miles of the southern coast of Formosa or northern Luzon. During the early morning a single black-bodied fighter from INDEPENDENCE shot down three unsuspecting planes flying north from Luzon to Formosa. These planes were probably carrying important staff personnel.

"Our own estimate of the situation," related the Third Fleet's Chief of

¹ Task Group 38.1

Carriers: YORKTOWN, WASP, CABOT, COWPENS

Battleships: SOUTH DAKOTA, MASSACHUSETTS

Cruisers: SAN FRANCISCO, BALTIMORE, BOSTON, SAN DIEGO

17 destroyers

Task Group 38.2

Carriers: LEXINGTON, HANGCOCK, HORNET

Battleships: NEW JERSEY, WISCONSIN

Cruisers: PASADENA, ASTORIA, WILKES-BARRE, SAN JUAN

14 destroyers

Task Group 38.3

Carriers: ESSEX, TICONDEROGA, LANGLEY, SAN JACINTO

Battleships: WASHINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

Cruisers: SANTA FE, VINCENNES, MIAMI, BILOXI, FLINT

17 destroyers

Task Group 38.5 (night)

Carriers: ENTERPRISE, INDEPENDENCE

6 destroyers

Staff, Admiral Carney, "in the Philippines and in Formosa was to the effect that the operational command was going to be shifted north very soon. We saw evidences of that in radio traffic, in the character of operations, and in a number of fragmentary bits of intelligence which, when pieced together, pointed to that conclusion. We felt convinced that those Nip NATS planes were carrying important units of the First Combined Base Air Command of the Philippines to set up new headquarters in Formosa.

"We managed to come through the channel undetected as we had hoped and predicted and we ordered Captain Acuff to rendezvous with us the following day.

"Captain Acuff had informed us the rendezvous might be somewhat delayed as one of his tankers had a bloody nose and another one had a sore tail. When we saw these tankers the following day, we realized that this was no understatement. The hole in the stern of one of those ships exposed three decks and several compartments and much of the private life of the afterguard. But the Captain was willing to keep going and Acuff knew that the oil must be delivered even if the ships were ultimately lost."

2.

What had happened was that about one o'clock in the morning, while the fast tanker group was steaming in formation through Balintang Channel, NANTAHALA's gyro went out. Visibility was very poor, 1,000 yards or less.

Captain Boddy of GUADALUPE was sleeping in the chart room when he was awakened by the TBS report of the gyro failure. The NANTAHALA was a little over 1,000 yards on GUADALUPE's starboard bow. Boddy stepped out on the bridge just in time to hear the radar operator report that NANTAHALA was closing from the starboard. At the same time the lookout on the starboard wing of the bridge reported the same thing.

"Left full rudder. All engines back full."

But it was too late. Things happen quickly at such close quarters, especially when you are making 16 knots.

The GUADALUPE's bow plowed into NANTAHALA's port quarter, splitting her open from steering engine room to barbershop. The GUADALUPE's bow was stove in for 12 feet, and her anchors were pressed firmly into her hull.

But the two ships continued on through, into the enclosed sea, fearing the worst but hoping for the best. Deep in the heart of enemy waters, expecting any minute to be bombed or torpedoed, damage just as cruel as enemy action had come to the auxiliary fleet by the whim of machine and weather.

The next day, after rendezvous, the fleet—task force and tankers—headed southwest through the dark choppy waters of the South China Sea. Halsey's luck seemed too good to be true. The whole Third Fleet was cruising in waters that the Japanese had heretofore looked upon as an imperial lake.

And, incredible of incredibles, the Japanese did not even know that their sanctum had been penetrated. Halsey, they thought, was still in his familiar battle sea, east of the Philippines.

The South China Sea is practically landlocked, and the Japanese had ringed it with air bases—in Indo-China, the Netherlands East Indies, Thailand, China, and the Philippines. They had over a thousand aircraft, mostly Army, that could search out and strike a fleet in almost any part of the enclosed sea.

The heavy weather prevented the topping off of destroyers that first day, but the next day the fleet was fueled from the six fast tankers while proceeding downwind on the southwesterly course.

Cautious, defensive searches were sent out from the carriers, the pilots being instructed to avoid detection at all costs. Halsey wanted to choose the time and the place to make his presence known.

Several unsuspecting and no doubt greatly surprised Japs who happened to come near the force were shot down before they could radio the startling news to their home fields. Included in the toll were three unobservant Jakes, chasing a Southwest Pacific reconnaissance plane. They were engaged and quickly splashed by the combat air patrol from TICONDEROGA.

Halsey expected to find ISE and HYUGA, and perhaps accompanying cruisers and destroyers, lurking near Camranh Bay on the Indo-China coast, so he laid his plans accordingly.

On the afternoon of the 11th, after fueling was completed, Halsey detached Admiral Bogan's Task Group 38.2, which was built around the carriers LEXINGTON, HANCOCK, HORNET and the fast new battleships NEW JERSEY (Captain Carl Holden) and WISCONSIN, and included for the operation the night carrier group (ENTERPRISE and INDEPENDENCE). The

plan called for a fast run in toward the coast, a predawn search for Jap ships by the night-flying aircraft, and then a joint destruction of the napping Japs by gunfire from the surface ships and by bombs and torpedoes from the carrier planes.

3

The top gold braid of the Third Fleet were ready for a good show: McCain and his staff in *HANCOCK*; Halsey & Co. in *NEW JERSEY*. As they started in for the Indo-China coast, Halsey sent his force a characteristic message which presupposed a knowledge of the afterlife from top to bottom: "You know what to do. Give them hell. God bless you all—"

But when they got there the harbor was bare—at least as far as combatant ships were concerned. The predawn searches located only ships of minor types. Regretfully the heavy gunnery ships turned about and rejoined the main body of Task Force 38.

Later it was learned that the battleships had been deprived of their prey due to the efficiency of the U.S. submarines. The Japanese were eager to bring the remnants of their fleet back to home waters and had arranged to rendezvous these ships with a group of tankers off Cape St. Jacques. But the submariners got there first and destroyed the tankers with a few well-aimed torpedoes. So *ISE*, *HYUGA*, and company backtracked to Singapore.

The fliers, however, still had a good day romping up and down the Indo-China coast from Saigon to Quihon, a distance of over 400 miles. Fighters blanketed the numerous airfields within the striking area, and only 14 Japs rose to challenge the Hellcats; all were shot down, 11 of them by F6Fs carrying standard belly tanks and in some cases bombs and rockets as well. On the ground 97 planes were destroyed, some of which had just flown in from Burma.

The Japanese were caught completely by surprise, that was certain. Four convoys, steaming happily along the coast, were pounced upon and each almost completely destroyed. At Saigon River the dismantled French cruiser *LAMOTTE PICOQUET* was attacked and sunk. The Japanese light cruiser *KASHII*, used for training, was sunk in deep water. Destroyer escorts, large oilers, freighters, sub chasers—40 ships in all—were sunk, for a total of 127,000 tons, an all-time high for a single day's operation.

During the day the result of a co-ordinated attack on an enemy light

destroyer was somewhat unexpected. Fighters came in strafing and kindled several good fires on the squirming ship. Dive bombers followed with near misses which, although they did some damage to the Jap ship, put out the fires with their splashes. This happened four times before it was decided that "bombing of DEs when already afire is an unprofitable pastime."

The fliers also ran amuck over shore installations. Oil tanks at Saigon formerly belonging to American companies (Shell, Texas, and Vacuum) were flamed; two locomotives were shot up; warehouses and docks were set afire.

A witness to this destruction was Japanese Admiral Shigeru Fukudome, who had commanded all Japanese Navy planes in the Philippines. By January 8, when he was ordered to Singapore, only 30 flyable planes were left of the two air fleets that for some time had maintained a strength of between 600 and 700 aircraft. From Cavite, in Manila Bay, he had flown to Camranh Bay in a single-engined, two-seated float plane. From there he had moved to Saigon, where his journey was unexpectedly delayed by the visit of Task Force 38.

As the fleet retired after its fruitful day of life-line severing, typhoons again came into the picture. It seemed as if these storms just smelled Halsey out and followed him around. Some of his men began to refer to him as "Typhoon Bill."

The typhoon moved northwest across the South China Sea heading for the Indo-China coast.

"This time," related Carney, "we had it plotted and, although we were annoyed, we kept out of danger, and managed to refuel after hunting around for smooth water for some time. The typhoon proceeded across the China Sea and then remained stationary on the Indo-China coast, finishing off 10 of 15 Japanese ships which had been beached after our attack to avoid sinking. So we gave the designation Task Force 'O' to this typhoon in full recognition of its friendly character."

Men on the destroyers CUSHING, SPERRY, TAUSSIG, and BLUE had their own ideas about the "friendly" character of the reinforced monsoon, however, for each of the ships was damaged by the heaving seas and the slashing winds.

Fueling in such a sea by all rights should have been impossible, but through superhuman efforts, aided by good seamanship, the fleet drained the last of Acuff's six fast oilers to the last drop. The tanker group then

headed toward Mindoro for a rendezvous with replacement oilers that had been sailed through Surigao Strait. Halsey and the Third Fleet continued their run north to the other end of the China Sea.

Meanwhile cheering reports were received from the French; a number of pilots shot down in Indo-China had been rescued, were in friendly hands, and were being returned to American hands via Kunming in China.

4

Halsey had been ordered by Nimitz to place the Third Fleet in a strategic position in the northern part of the China Sea and be ready to intercept any Jap forces that might attempt to approach the Lingayen Gulf area from either Formosa or the south. The big boys were still worried about a possible squeeze play on the Lingayen beaches.

The message concluded: "... continue all efforts to locate the enemy heavy ships and if more important targets do not appear, strike Hong Kong at your discretion."

The weather continued to run "regrettably true to form and forecasts" and in the early dark hours of the morning of January 15 Slew McCain recommended that the strike on Formosa, scheduled for that day, be abandoned and suggested that the task force reverse its course. Servicing planes on a rolling ship, taking off and landing from a dodging deck, flying blind through rain and wind, were not much to the liking of the strained pilots.

Halsey paced up and down in his cabin as he weighed the situation. Even if the task force reversed course now, it would be within range of Jap attack. Also holding down the Formosa air groups and attack on Japanese ship concentrations was of major importance to the landing at Lingayen. So Halsey decided to attack.

Formosa was practically closed in that day and the ceiling near the carriers pressed down to 200 feet. Many a pilot that day thanked his lucky constellation that his instructor in flight school had been tough and had made him learn navigation and instrument flying.

Effective attacks were difficult due to the low ceilings, so the final tally for the day at Takao was only eight ships. Air opposition was negligible, with 34 enemy planes destroyed, half on the ground and half in the air.

Various odd jobs were done by the rampaging fliers: shops and factories were bombed, locomotives exploded, warehouses, docks, and barracks burned, and even a small weather station was shot up, while searches reached out to the Chinese cities of Amoy and Canton, to Hong Kong, and westward to Hainan Island.

Task Force 38 was flying hard in spite of some of the most prolonged bad weather encountered during the entire Pacific War.

Halsey's sweeps were demonstrating that the China coast was soft, just as the Philippines had been the previous September. Remembering what had happened in the Philippines soon after a similar sweep, the Japanese now began to speculate as to whether MacArthur would jump from the Philippines into China once Luzon was cleaned up.

The next day attention was shifted to Hong Kong, Canton, and Hainan Island, with Hong Kong taking the brunt of the assault. But Hong Kong was well supplied with anti-aircraft batteries and the six waves that attacked that day ran into some of the most intense fire yet experienced in carrier operation. It varied from "intense to unbelievable." Jap fire control and accuracy also was excellent, especially on the first attack in the afternoon when one out of every eight attacking planes was lost.

For the first time in many months U.S. plane losses exceeded those of the Japanese. A total of 47 Jap planes were destroyed during the two-day strike while the carriers lost 30 in combat and 31 operationally.

5

The Third Fleet was in the China Sea, all right, and its fliers had ridden the wind like screaming typhoon-devils, ripping at the soft belly of Asia with the claws of tigers. Now there remained the problem of getting out.

For over a week Japanese broadcasts had the fleet "bottled up" in the China Sea; for a week now, the Japanese radio threatened horrible destruction when Halsey attempted to withdraw his ships.

Again Halsey had two routes to choose between: Luzon Strait, through which he had slipped in undetected, and Surigao Strait, to the south. Surigao had several advantages; it was a sheltered route, the ships could be readily fueled, and passage could be made on a fixed schedule—a thing dear to the precisionist's heart. But it would place the fleet in a

strategically awkward position, since the fleet's main function was to protect the Luzon landings to the north. Also, a whole fleet passing through the narrow waters of Surigao would almost certainly be spotted by enemy observation posts, and the American commanders wanted to keep the Japanese guessing.

So Halsey, in spite of the possibility of stormy weather, decided to go back out the door through which he had sneaked in. To Nimitz on Guam he radioed his intentions: he would leave the China Sea on the night of January 18, via Balintang Channel.

But the weather had its own ideas about that.

Heavy seas and a 40-knot wind from the northeast made fueling from the new group of oilers¹ almost impossible, so the whole fleet, oilers in company, ran north searching for water that remained reasonably horizontal. None was found, and the next day the reinforced monsoon continued to toss the fleet about like wood chips in a bucket. The NEHENTA BAY, one of the escort carriers in the service group, reported that the forward part of its flight deck had been bent down to the forecastle by the heavy seas.

Halsey had received word that Admiral Spruance had left Hawaii in his flagship INDIANAPOLIS for Ulithi, where he was to relieve Halsey as soon as he returned from his sweep of the China Sea. Plans were already completed for a new assault in the Central Pacific and now Halsey had to return the fleet. But before he returned, Halsey had another chore to perform. . . .

Considering the need of returning on time, Halsey changed his mind about his exit route. He radioed Nimitz that he would leave by way of Surigao unless told to do otherwise.

While the fleet was refueling in calmer waters in the lee of Luzon, Halsey received a dispatch from Nimitz authorizing a delay in the return to Ulithi and directing that the Third Fleet remain in the China Sea until the weather permitted leaving by Balintang Channel. He did not want the Japanese to locate the Third Fleet in Surigao Strait.

Halsey decided to make the dash in the night of January 20-21. Special aircraft aerological searches were sent to Luzon Strait, and the

¹ The composition of the service group now was as follows: Oilers: MANATEE, MONONGAHELA, PATUKENT, NEOSHO, CHEIKASKIA, NOBRARA, PAMANSET, CALIENTE. Escort Carriers: NEHENTA BAY, RUDYERD BAY, CAPE ESPERANCE, ALTAMAHA. Destroyers: DALE, WELLES, THATCHER, BLUE, DYSON, HOBBY, FARRAGUT, MAG DONOUGE, THORN, "EAVES."

weather and sea conditions were found to be suitable for a passage of the fleet.

So the fleet, hiding under an overcast, headed east, the three carrier task groups in column and a destroyer division sweeping ahead. By four in the afternoon the radar screens were constantly filled with bogies, some heading north, some south. The fleet was obviously passing under an aircraft ferry lane between Luzon and Formosa.

"They were all flying at about the same height," related Carney. "They were apparently all ferry pilots and had no reason to expect that we were there, at least they hadn't been briefed on it. They flew over the route as though they were on a trolley wire. As each one went over the CAP knocked it down. About 14 of them were knocked down without ever knowing that they'd been hit or even deviating in flight. Finally one flew over the force, still apparently oblivious to us, but became suspicious when about 50 ships opened fire on him. He reported that there was intense American activity in the channel.

"It came too late, however, and the operation was not interrupted."

Before midnight the fleet was through the passage and once again in the Philippine Sea. The Fast Carrier Task Force had completed the severance of the "Southern Resource Area" from the Home Islands of the empire.

Halsey flashed a brief message to Nimitz: "We have completed 3,800-mile cruise in the China Sea and not one Japanese plane got within 20 miles of our ships. That's gratitude."

6

MacArthur worried about the Japanese fleet. With memories of the attempted Japanese sea squeeze on Leyte Gulf still vivid in his mind, he was afraid the Imperial Navy might try the same thing again.

Nimitz tried to reassure the General with the Navy estimate of the situation. According to the latest intelligence, he pointed out, four of the enemy battleships, KONGO, HARUNA, NAGATO, and YAMATO, were in empire waters while the hermaphrodite battleships ISE and HYUGA were in the Singapore area. There seemed to be little possibility that these ships could be used in an attack on the beachhead. "Meanwhile enemy air strength both in Formosa and in Okinawa is increasing to such an extent that it has become a primary target for carrier attack. The Third Fleet, operating

in the South China Sea in a more or less fixed position, is obtaining diminishing returns with increasing risk. I propose to direct Halsey to strike enemy air force at Formosa and Okinawa. He will still be in a position to cover Lingayen area. Admiral King concurs in this plan."

But what would happen when the Third Fleet pulled away? MacArthur still thought the wily Japs might take a quick jab at his beaches and, until he reached Manila, Lingayen was his only supply base. To make certain that the gulf was protected he wanted to keep the old battleships he had borrowed from the Pacific Fleet.

Nimitz replied that he did not agree that the Japs could muster their six battleships for a quick attack on Kinkaid's forces nor did he consider "the Japanese Fleet capable of inflicting disaster to our Philippine operations if our fleet is employed offensively . . . The best naval protection for the Philippines as well as for the exposed island positions elsewhere in the Pacific is to proceed with offensive operations against Japan . . ."

Nimitz had in mind two great invasions that would soon be unleashed from the Central Pacific.

7

Halsey prepared to get in the two more strikes against the Nips before he headed his ships for the barn at Ulithi—the one on Formosa and the other on Okinawa. Forty minutes before sunrise on January 21 the first strikes were launched against the replenished Jap airfields and refilled Jap harbors on Formosa. For the first time in a month the skies were clear of squalls.

But the weather also aided the Japanese.

At noon the fleet was approximately 100 miles east of the southern coast of Formosa with the three task groups spread widely over the sea, Radford's and Bogan's carriers to the south and Sherman's farther to the north.

The battleships NORTH CAROLINA and WASHINGTON in Sherman's group were fueling four destroyers. Many friendly planes were returning and radar identification was difficult. Gun crews were on the alert for any stray Japs that might try to break through the fighter cover.

Suddenly a single-engined Jap plane glided out of the sun and dropped two small bombs, one of which dug into the forward part of LANGLEY's flight deck. Two minutes later another Jap glided undetected out of the

clouds and crashed into the nose end of TICONDEROGA's deck, starting heavy fires in the hangar decks below.

The Japanese had once again found the range.

As Sherman's group maneuvered around the wounded TICONDEROGA to give her close support while she fought her fires, a large raid approached Radford's group from the south, presumably from the Babuyan Islands north of Luzon, but two divisions of fighters were vectored out from COWPENS and succeeded in breaking the raid up by splashing 14 planes.

At the same time more Japs closed Sherman from Formosa. Most of these were intercepted by CAP, but at 12:51 a plane that had eluded the watchful eye of radar glided in on the crippled TICONDEROGA. Antiaircraft gunners' eyes were sharper. The attacker was cut to pieces in the air.

But so long as there was one suicide-minded Jap left in the air . . .

Four minutes later another plane came in on a flat glide, nosed up, and crashed into the superstructure of TICONDEROGA. Both Captain Dixie Kiefer and the Executive Officer, Commander William O. Burch, were seriously injured. All radios and radar were smashed out of commission, the flight deck lay inoperable, and the hangar deck was gutted by galloping fires.

At the end of the day 345 casualties were counted, 143 dead.

Bad luck always seems to run in streaks and the afternoon of January 21 was no exception. The MADDOX, one of Sherman's destroyers on picket duty 35 miles in toward Formosa, was crash-dived by a Zeke, but damage was light.

The HANCOCK, in Bogan's group to the south, was recovering aircraft when a torpedo plane came in and made a normal landing. Taxiing forward, the plane was just opposite the island structure when a 500-pound bomb dropped from the bomb bay and exploded on the flight deck, starting heavy fires.

Fires on both LANGLEY and HANCOCK were quickly brought under control and by the middle of the afternoon they were able to recover aircraft. The TICONDEROGA and MADDOX, however, had to be shunted to Ulithi for hospitalization.

Although it was the first time since November that the Fast Carrier Task Force had been subjected to a serious Japanese attack, the damage for that day was not all on the Japanese side of the ledger.

On the airfields of Formosa, the Pescadores, Sakashima Gunto (the string of islands between Formosa and Okinawa), and Okinawa the carrier fliers ferreted out and destroyed 107 planes, a high score for the month. Despite heavy AA fire and barrage balloons, shipping in the harbors of Takao, Toshien, and Keelung were rocketed, bombed, and strafed. By the end of the day Takao looked much like Manila had a few months earlier after the first attacks by Task Force 38. Wrecked ships littered the harbor, some rested on the shallow bottom with their superstructure above water giving the appearance from the air of being undamaged.

There was one high priority job remaining to be done before the Third Fleet headed for the island of Mog-Mog and its restful environs. The job seemed simple, yet it was one of the most vital assignments of the Third Fleet—obtaining photographic coverage of Okinawa. Back in the War Plans sections in Washington and on Guam the machinery was in motion, blueprinting the invasions of the future, directing the energy of the nation toward the final goal—Japan. Many of the men who were to wade ashore had probably never heard of Okinawa, although Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry had claimed it for the United States a century ago, advising Washington long before the Japanese incorporated the island in their empire, that someday it would come in handy. The planners, bent intently over their maps, had to know every hump of land, every yard of beach, every forking road before the first leatherneck put his foot on a slanting gangplank.

And the fliers from the fast carriers had to supply this basic information.

While the fighters struck at the Okinawa airfields (destroying 28 planes), specially equipped torpedo planes crisscrossed the island taking more photographs than a generation of honeymooning couples.

Over one particular hot spot, the Yontan airstrip, a photographic team of four planes flying abreast covered the area in one pass, thus saving repeated runs by a single plane.

One strip of coastal area figured vitally in the invasion plans. Three planes were assigned to it, but by one of those strange twists of fate two of the planes broke down and the camera in the third got temperamental and wouldn't co-operate. The maintenance officer, his face flushed, sweated vainly to repair the decked planes. The day was saved, however, when it was discovered that a pilot from LEXINGTON, his own area closed

in by weather, had, on his own initiative, taken complete pictures of the high priority area in question.

By the end of the day the contours of Okinawa were thoroughly and indelibly recorded.

8

Triumphantly the Third Fleet pointed its bows toward Ulithi, having demonstrated the pithy weakness of the Japanese in the China Sea. No longer could raw materials be piped north into the voracious and gaping mouth of the Japanese war machine. No longer did the outer defenses of the Japanese Empire include jungled Burma and the rich island world of the East Indies—they were nothing but isolated outposts.

The long, strong fingers of America's sea might had closed around the neck of an emaciated empire.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

On to Manila

I

BY NIGHTFALL of invasion day (January 9), 68,000 American troops were ashore on Luzon and the commanding generals of the four assault divisions had set up headquarters on dry land. The troops held 15 miles of beachhead in Lingayen Bay, extending 3 to 4 miles inland.

As usual, by invasion day eve long-range Navy flying boats, the winged whales, were operating from Lingayen. PTs also had moved in, to start their coastal patrols.

In modern warfare supplies and equipment are as vital as men. Around the clock sailors and soldiers sweated shoulder to shoulder piling the beaches high with the stuff of warfare—seven tons per man on the beach! The larger transports were unloaded by amphibious vehicles and self-propelled pontoon barges. By dusk of the first day most of the transports were emptied and ready to leave. Pontoon causeways were used to unload the LSTs, which, except for those at the eastern beaches, could not approach the shore closer than a hundred yards. Heavy swells made unloading extremely difficult. Most of the causeways and pontoon barges broached, and small boats dropped and rose like cars on a roller-coaster.

On the second day a myth was born. A new type Japanese plane was shot down over Lingayen and fell within the beachhead perimeter. Investigation of the crash revealed that the dead pilot was wearing the regalia of the Black Dragon Society and was shackled by the ankles to the rudder bar of the plane. This led some persons to believe that Kamikaze pilots were forced into their one-way mission, an assumption which was promoted into Stateside civilian propaganda. The fable did no credit to anyone concerned. Actually, the shackling was a part of the Bushido ritual of the Black Dragon Society, proof to the ancestral gods that the warrior was indivisible from his mission.

On S-plus-2-day, January 11, the first reinforcement convoy (Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly) arrived carrying the 25th Division, which was immediately put ashore over the San Fabian beaches. The same day MacArthur's Advance Headquarters was opened at the town of Dagupan midway between Lingayen and San Fabian. The General went ashore permanently two days later from BOISE, the same day Krueger said good-bye to Kinkaid on WASATCH.

The Luzon campaign was underway in earnest.

From the beginning it was evident that Yamashita did not intend to give battle in the Central Plain area. Instead he hoped to hold out in the flanking mountains and force the Americans to fritter away their forces attacking him.

Preinvasion intelligence had indicated that the Japanese had 235,000 troops on Luzon; of these, two divisions were concentrated in the hills to the east of Lingayen Gulf. It was from these dug-in positions that the Japanese shelled the San Fabian beaches, and it was here that stiff resistance to the I Corps developed. The Japanese seemed intent to hold at all costs the approaches to the mountain passes of northern Luzon where Yamashita hoped to hold out indefinitely, "to hang on doggedly in the Philippines and await the plans of later years." From the outset he realized that a Japanese victory on Luzon was impossible.

While the I Corps engaged the enemy defense line on the northern flank, the XIV Corps, after pushing south over the rice paddies and tangled streams, slashed out into the Central Plain. There was little opposition, for Yamashita feared to challenge American armor in the flat open country. In fact the Japanese were wide open in this direction.

Krueger was quick to take advantage of this weakness. He ordered the XIV Corps to continue the push south with the first major objective the Clark Field complex, the core of Japanese air power in the Philippines. This, the longest airdrome area outside the empire, was more than halfway to Manila on the western side of the plain and was reportedly defended by thousands of infantry troops.

Since the I Corps was engaging main enemy battle positions, its advance was ordered held up until it was reinforced by two more divisions, the 32nd Infantry and the 1st Cavalry, the latter now mounted on trucks and tanks instead of horses. Krueger feared that major battle commitments on this flank might jeopardize the security of the vital beach-head, now the base of supplies.

Meanwhile great convoys of laden ships kept filing into the gulf while other convoys of unloaded ships retraced their wakes to Leyte.

At dusk on D-plus-3-day (January 12) Admiral Wilkinson in MOUNT OLYMPUS steamed out of Lingayen Gulf in a fast convoy of two dozen transports. His job was done now and Admiral Nimitz wanted him back in the Central Pacific, where great plans were brewing.

The convoy received a brief fright when "several large warships" were reported heading south from Swatow, China, near Formosa. Oldendorf's heavy ships took up a covering position to the northward of the convoy hoping the Japs would try something. But the whole thing fizzled out. Later aircraft sightings indicated that the "warships" had probably consisted of an enemy convoy and escort.

The ISE and HYUGA still were unlocated despite extensive searches and it was feared that, under cover of the weather, the two ships might make a dash up the coast of Borneo and Palawan and make a quick strike on the convoy. The escort carriers threw out a fan of searchers but failed to find any Jap surface force, and the convoy proceeded safely to Leyte.

On the morning of January 13, the Philippine Kamikazes struck out in their last convulsive effort. An unseen plane crashed into the deck of the escort carrier SALAMAU. Three minutes later the last suicider, an Oscar, ended up in the water 1,000 yards on the port beam of the destroyer BAGLEY (Commander William H. Shea, Jr.).

2

At Lingayen Town the Japanese had built a 5,000-foot airstrip. When American troops captured the area, the engineers immediately started giving a thorough facial to the runway, which was pockmarked by many a bomb and shell. By January 17 the strip was in serviceable shape and Kenney's Air Force felt strong enough to assume responsibility for direct ground support to troops and also to protect the ships in the gulf. An hour after sunset that evening Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin with 8 escort carriers and 12 destroyers took leave of the Lingayen area and headed for Ulithi to await orders from the Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, Admiral Nimitz.

By January 28 the XIV Corps had smashed its way into the Clark Field-Fort Stotsenburg area. The airfields themselves were quickly seized but the Japanese held strong positions in the mountains to the west from

which they could place harassing fire on the runways. Demolition squads, covered by small-arms and machine-gun fire had to go after the Japs with flame throwers, white phosphorous grenades, thermite grenades, and demolition charges before that menace was eradicated.

In the I Corps area to the north the high ground near the Jap strong point of Rosario had been captured.

A determined wedge had been driven smack down the middle of Luzon.

All was now ready for the final plunge to Manila.

3

One of the great unexplained mysteries of the invasion of Lingayen was the large minefield that the Japs were reputed to have laid down. What had become of it? Not a single mine had been swept during the three days prior to the landing.

The riddle was solved soon after the invasion when Captain Arthur H. McCollum, Kinkaid's intelligence officer, made a trip to Dagupan, MacArthur's headquarters, to talk with one of his chief preinvasion informers, a Luzon guerrilla leader, Lieutenant Colonel Russell Volckmann. This fabulous officer had escaped from Bataan and had established what was perhaps the most effective single combat guerrilla force in the world which, before the end of the war, numbered almost two divisions.

"What happened to those minefields that you warned us about?" queried McCollum.

"When you landed in Leyte Gulf, we knew that sooner or later you would be coming in Lingayen," replied Volckmann.

"Yes, but what happened to those mines?"

"My men [guerrillas sometimes called them "Dragon Hunters" and "Northerners"] started snaking them from their moorings about the time of the Leyte landing and they have been at it ever since. We have been clearing mines for sixty days."

Volckmann went on to explain how it was done. Using the crudest of methods Filipinos rowed two bancas (native boats) towing a manila line in a loop between them. The bancas were rowed along the "mine line" until a mine was caught in the loop, whereupon one of the islanders slipped into the water, unshackled the mine case from its mooring and attached a towline to the 500-pound explosive. Freed mines were towed to

the beach where the Filipino "mine experts" removed the horns, boosters, and detonators. The explosives were then scooped out of the mines to be used against the Japanese, and the cases prosaically converted to wash-tubs.

"We had no idea how many of the mines had been snaked and consequently did not feel justified in changing our original estimate," said Volckmann.

As a matter of fact the guerrillas, in a period of less than two months, had disposed of over 350 mines.

4

Further to disjoin the Japanese on Luzon MacArthur made use of that great mobile highway over which his naval forces now held undeniable command—the sea. The Kamikaze threat in the Philippines was over now and it did not appear that the Japanese were yet ready to risk their few remaining surface ships in a quick attack. The sea was open and the Seventh Fleet used it well.

When the Japanese descended on Luzon at the outbreak of the war, American and Filipino troops had retreated into the rugged Bataan peninsula and there had held out for four months.¹ With the tables reversed and the Americans now sweeping down on Manila, MacArthur wanted to be certain that the Japanese did not try the same thing. Bataan would have to be cut off from the Central Plain area.

On the morning of January 29 an Attack Group including 22 transports and 35 LSTs drew up off San Antonio, a small town on the west coast of Luzon, 15 miles west of Subic Bay. From his flagship MOUNT MC KINLEY (Captain Wayne N. Gamet) Rear Admiral Arthur D. Struble eyed the beach. It looked as if the landing would be easy.

But once again the guerrilla forces of the Philippines had done the initial dirty work.

Aboard the destroyer YOUNG (Commander Donald G. Dockum) look-outs saw many Filipinos milling around campfires. Some waved American flags. A small banca headed out from the beach. A quick burst across its bow by one of YOUNG's 20mms produced a white flag but the little canoe came on. It brought a welcomed courier in the form of Lieutenant A. F. Tadena of the guerrilla forces of Luzon who said that the entire

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume I.

area was in friendly hands and that the Stars and Stripes had already been raised on the beach. Other guerrilla leaders came out to confirm the story. The coast was clear—literally so—so Admiral Struble had no need to call on the persuasive powers of the light cruiser DENVER and its three destroyers, before he put the 38th Division (Major General Charles P. Hall) and the 134th Regimental Combat Team—a total of 35,000 men—ashore. Nor did the six escort carriers operating to the westward have much direct supporting to do. The troops were completely unopposed. In fact even the airstrip at nearby San Marcelino had been seized three days earlier by guerrillas.

The loyalty, discipline, and resourcefulness of the Filipino underground in fighting the Japanese usurpers of their homeland had again saved hundreds of American lives.

Besides cutting off a possible Japanese retreat, one of the objects of the landing in Zambales Province was to seize Subic Bay and open it to American shipping. It was a good anchorage and at one time was a U.S. Naval Station.

At the mouth of the bay is Grande Island, fortified by both Japanese and Americans. So the next day four destroyer transports and the MONITOR, a landing ship vehicle, approached the island and landed a battalion of men. But the coast defense guns were unmanned and the only sign of life was a canoeload of natives who flew an old Dutch flag upside down.

An LCI was sent up the bay to reconnoiter. She reported that troops landed the previous day at San Antonio had already reached Olongapo at the head of the bay. Before sunset that evening all of Subic Bay was ours.

The only naval casualty of the whole Zambales operation had been the attack transport CAVALIER. Returning in convoy from the San Antonio landing she was torpedoed on the morning of January 30 off Subic Bay by a submarine. But she did not sink and was towed safely to Leyte.

5

Before the landing at Lingayen American forces had feinted toward the Batangas Province south of Manila. On the last day of January the feint became a reality when two regimental combat teams of the 11th Airborne Division (Major General Joseph M. Swing) were landed at

Nasugbu, a little town just south of the entrance to Manila Bay. The object was to drive inland to the great lake, Laguna de Bay, and then swing north to attack Manila.

A short bombardment was carried out by destroyers before Rear Admiral William M. Fechteler gave orders to "land the landing force." Two sugar-mill stacks standing near the beaches had been listed for destruction. But the mills were spared, at least so thought Commander Kenneth G. Robinson, skipper of *FLUSSER*, until a few hours later when he encountered the owner of the mill, an angered Scotsman.

"For three years I've been fighting those Japs," shouted the excited Scot, "but even they didn't try to destroy my sugar mill."

Robinson expressed his regrets, but . . .

"Only two shots fall near my mill," continued the Scot, paying no attention. "One of them knocks out the diesel generator and the second knocks out the other! Now all my power is gone!"

The only opposition during the landing came from a few machine guns hidden close to a barn on the north side of the harbor. These pecked away at the landing craft until administered a few "sleeping tablets" from the ample supply in the destroyer *CLAXTON*'s 5-inch magazine.

The troops plunged inland heading for Manila. Theirs was to be a strange advance indeed, for instead of meeting enemy troops—although there were a few skirmishes—the road to Manila was filled with cheering crowds waving American flags. And in some communities they were even greeted with brass bands.

6

The real action at Nasugbu was fought off the beaches the night of the landing. The night was quiet, the sea calm, and the moon full. Few clouds covered the stars. The tiny lights of the native huts twinkled peacefully across the water. Admiral Fechteler in his flagship, the Coast Guard Cutter *SPENCER*, had put to sea for the night escorted by the destroyers *SHAW* (Lieutenant Commander Victor P. Graff), *CONYNGHAM* (Lieutenant Commander Frank W. Bampton), and *RUSSELL* (Lieutenant Commander John E. Wicks, Jr.).

Three destroyer escorts, the *RICHARD W. SUESSENS* (Lieutenant Commander Robert W. Graham) to the north, the *TINSMAN* (Lieutenant William G. Grote) in the center, and the *LOUGH* to the south slowly pa-

trolled the island-dotted sea in an arc approximately five miles from the beachhead. The destroyers *FLUSSER* (Commander Kenneth G. Robinson) and *CLAXTON* (Commander Maxim W. Firth) steamed inside the arc. *PC 623* (Lieutenant William D. Okerson) extended *SUESSENS'* patrol to the north and *PC 1129* (Lieutenant (jg) Robert A. Matthews) steamed inshore from the *LOUGH* to the south.

Lookouts aboard *PC 1129* thought they saw a line of small boats across their patrol path. Peering harder they made out quite a few. The boats seemed to be dead in the water or else moving very slowly. *PC 1129* radioed: "Small skunks in the water. We are investigating."

"We'll come along to help," replied Lieutenant Commander Blaney C. Turner, *LOUGH's* captain. Simultaneously he ordered his ship to general quarters.

The *LOUGH's* radar showed nothing, but the moonlight did. Stretched out from east to west as far as Turner could see were small boats rowed up like fleas behind a dog's ear.

"Realizing that we were running into an ambush," states Turner in his action report, "we came hard right at best speed to outflank the suiciders. Having moved to the westward where the boats were flanked, we approached from down moonlight and opened fire so that our bullets would enfilade the entire line."

The Jap boats, and the count was variously estimated from six to thirty, scattered like flushed quail.

"As we attacked one," says Turner, "two or three others popped up on the other side. We tried to silhouette each one against the moon before opening fire. Sometimes we fired at as many as four at one time. The *TINSMAN*, *CLAXTON*, and most all the other ships fired. During the scrap *CLAXTON* reported torpedoes close aboard just before a target obviously submerged about 1,000 yards ahead of us. It was probably a midget submarine."

The ships were still firing when *CLAXTON* radioed that *PC 1129* had suffered damage. And she had indeed. Through the binoculars Turner saw a dim "SOS," flashing from what appeared to be a broached submarine. Actually it turned out to be the only part of *PC 1129's* hull that remained afloat. The little ship, after destroying two boats, had been swamped by the Jap suiciders. She had capsized and nearly all her crew were either on rafts or were swimming about in the water. When survivors were recovered it was found that only one man was missing, the

single casualty of the ambush. All the Jap boats had been sunk or chased out of the area.

The success was to have a bitter aftermath.

7

Next night, at approximately the same time and under the same conditions, LOUGH's radar showed faint pips approaching from southward. Probably rain clouds, thought Turner. But after radioing the contacts to Admiral Fechteler, he raced south to make certain. The radar pips could be phantom. They could also very well be more suicide boats.

As the LOUGH started to eat up distance the destroyer CONYNGHAM's radio confirmed the hunch: the fuzzy-looking radar targets were positively not clouds but stuff a lot more solid.

The northward-bound targets seemed larger than the boats encountered the night before. Gradually they took the appearance of PT boats and were so reported by LOUGH and CONYNGHAM to Fechteler.

Were these friendly PTs? Every possible radio challenge went out to the target, but no answer. The LOUGH brightened the target with star shells. The ships looked like full-grown PTs, sure enough. Worried, Turner broadcast the query whether any friendly PTs were in the area.

"Negative," replied the flagship, "treat the contact as enemy."

The decision was based on SPENCER's inability to contact the boats on the frequencies that PTs use. Every fifteen minutes since sundown SPENCER's radio had called "Any Martini [code word for PTs] on this circuit?" Other ships of the task group heard these calls, but there had been no answer.

The approaching targets showed no friendly radar indications nor did they use pyrotechnic or flash recognition signals. Their approach seemed distinctly offensive. There was nothing left but to open fire.

The CONYNGHAM and LOUGH opened up simultaneously and they had good reason. The PTs had separated, one going north, the other south, as if to launch a concerted torpedo attack. It appeared that the only way to prevent a torpedo attack was to close the northern target, and destroy it by gunfire since it was closest and the greatest hazard to the other ships.

When about 2,000 yards away, the oncoming PT flashed the letters "PT" at the LOUGH. Although earlier Turner had felt a little uncertain of

the nature of the boats, by now this thought had been completely dispelled. They had shown no friendly radar identification at any time. Their failure to withdraw at high speed when first taken under fire plus their failure to answer any radio calls caused Turner to believe it was a Jap trap. Japs could easily flash the letters "PT." They had pulled much cleverer tricks. Besides, it was known that the enemy had captured some Dutch PTs which closely resembled ours.

Aboard CONYNGHAM, Bampton came to the same conclusion. His radar officer reported that the northern target was racing in at about 20 knots, apparently making a torpedo attack. The upraised bow of the PT came into open view, making high speed down the path of the moon heading directly for CONYNGHAM's port bow—range $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

The CONYNGHAM's lookouts reported what looked like a dim bluish-white flashing light from the target. Small-caliber guns, maybe; deceptive recognition signal possibly; torpedo firing more likely.

With both LOUGH and CONYNGHAM firing rapidly at her, the northern target had little time to live. A big fire soon broke out, and the PT came to a sudden stop. The CONYNGHAM closed the burning boat and Bampton had a sudden qualm as he positively identified it as a PT boat so much like our own that the temptation was strong to go alongside. However, the continued threat of suicide boats such as had attacked the night before, and which had been earlier reported still in the vicinity, plus the presence of the other unidentified PT, made him decide to get away from the brightly flaming boat.

Meanwhile LOUGH continued the chase of the other PT, calling on CONYNGHAM for help because her fire control equipment had suddenly gone sour and she could not shoot at the mysterious intruder.

The CONYNGHAM fired: the second PT exploded.

The LOUGH swept in upon the shattered boats. Disbelief, then horror, choked the voices of destroyer men. "For God's sake—they're ours!"

8

And so they were.

After the suicide boat attacks the night of the landing Admiral Fechteler had requested a PT patrol to help combat the menace. Accordingly, two PTs—the 77 (Lieutenant (jg) Allen Slickers) and the 79 (Lieutenant (jg) Michael A. Haughian)—were ordered to proceed

to Talin Point, 6 miles south of Nasugbu, to contact Fechteler for clearance. They were then to patrol along the beachhead near Nasugbu, but were not to proceed north of Talin Point unless ordered to do so by Fechteler.

Voice radios have an irritating habit of getting out of adjustment, especially on a small bouncing ship. But usually the only hurt is to the tempers of the men who operate them. This night, however, the maladjustment of someone's radio was to be fatal.

The PTs could not contact Task Group 78.2, as Fechteler's group was known. So when the two PTs were 3 miles southwest of Talin Point, Lieutenant John H. Stillman, who was officer in tactical command of the two boats, changed course to the southward to patrol between Talin Point and Cape Santiago, about 12 miles down the coast.

The boats were patrolling at idling speed 3 to 4 miles offshore when, at 2310, two star shells burst between them and the beach. Both boats opened their throttles wide and started weaving south, at the same time laying down smoke. The little boats were taken under fire and it wasn't long before the 77 had been hit twice.

Lieutenant Stillman, however, believed the ships firing on him were friendly and would not permit any return fire. He had the visual recognition signal sent repeatedly. When that didn't seem to work, he had the quartermaster send "We are friendly PTs," not once but continuously. Also the boats attempted to identify themselves over the radio to no avail. Night identification flares, being yellow on this particular night, were not used for fear they would be identified as Japanese.

Within ten minutes the 77 had run aground on a reef 6 miles south of Talin Point. Stillman ordered all hands to abandon ship. Ten minutes later the abandoned PT was hit by a shell, exploded, and burned all night. Stillman was last seen swimming out to sea in an attempt to reach one of the shelling ships and get help.

The 79, following about a hundred yards astern, swerved hard to avoid the reef. She then came about and headed north, but within five minutes she was hit in the port side by a heavy shell. The Executive Officer, Lieutenant (jg) Stanley A. Mauritz, was standing on the starboard side of the bridge at the time. He was stunned by the explosion and when he looked to the port side of the bridge where the Captain had been, Haughian was not there. The quartermaster, Vincent A. Berra, also had vanished.

Fire immediately enveloped the little boat and all hands were forced to abandon ship immediately. One other man had also been killed in the explosion, Joseph E. Klesh, Motor Machinist's Mate 1/c, who was on duty in the engine room. None of the others was injured.

It was a long swim but survivors of both boats, 30 in number, reached the beach at different points and were picked up by friendly Filipinos. Two nights later two more PTs took all survivors aboard at a point 2 miles north of Santiago Point and returned them to Mindoro.

9

On the 1st of February the drive on Manila began in full force.

To the northeast the divisions of the I Corps held one flank at the edge of the mountains while to the southwest the 40th Division protected the other flank against Japanese forces concentrated in the Zambales Mountains to the rear of Clark Field. This left the Central Plain clear for attack.

Two divisions closed in on the capital city from the north. The 37th Infantry, which had recently been fighting in the Clark Field area, and the newly arrived 1st Cavalry, which had been concentrating for some days at the town of Guimba, 70 miles north of Manila.

With no real opposition the mechanized horsemen sped down Highway No. 5 in a spirited dash that would have drawn applause from the shade of Light-Horse Harry Lee.

Seven squadrons of Marine dive bombers had landed on Luzon toward the end of January and had begun operating from a jury-rigged field in sponged-out rice paddies. These highly trained squadrons had a special job to perform for Army, the job of giving close air support to the troops. Marines had long been convinced of the effectiveness of such support and had long practiced it. But air and ground commanders in the Army had always been a bit skeptical. It wasn't long, however, before the "Diving Devildogs of Luzon" proved they could place a bomb with artillery accuracy.

As the 1st Division's flying column raced south its left flank was covered and guarded by a flight of nine Marine dive bombers. From dawn to dark the SBDs were on constant patrol clearing the area for 30 miles ahead and 20 miles behind. It was a tactic that had few precedents in air-ground warfare.

By midnight of February 2 the 37th Infantry (which had run into some opposition) and the 1st Cavalry made contact and stood abreast some 15 miles outside Manila.

Next morning the 1st Cavalry, sweeping wide, struck through Santa Maria in the Novaliches watershed area and reached Grace Park in the northeast area of Manila. The 37th Division on the right encountered strong enemy delaying forces behind a series of blown bridges along its main advance route. But on February 4 the infantrymen joined the cavalymen inside the city. Meanwhile Major General Swing's 11th Airborne Division, which had landed at Nasugbu, was literally swinging into Manila from the south.

Thus three divisions—one infantry, one cavalry, one airborne—pressed in to crack Manila. It was to be a tough job.

When the original plan for the Japanese defense of Luzon was put into effect a great deal of stress was placed on Manila Bay and the surrounding shores. Corregidor and Caballo Islands, Cavite, Bataan peninsula, and the shore line of Manila itself were prepared for a last-ditch stand. But then the fighting on Leyte changed the picture. Shore defenses, the Japanese learned from that experience, would be impractical, yet a screen would have to be left in the city to guard against a sudden landing and the inevitable capture of military stores within the city. With the construction of network of strong positions in the Ipo Dam area in the mountains northeast of Manila an effort was made to move all ammunition, food, and medicine out of the city. When interviewed after the war, Yamashita claimed that if all these stores had been removed from the city before the Americans arrived, he would have withdrawn his troops and left Manila an open city.

But Manila, when the Americans arrived, was far from that. It soon became evident that since the landing at Lingayen the enemy had done everything to strengthen the defenses of the city.

Manila is divided by the sluggish, tidebound Pasig River and most of the Japanese defenses were concentrated south of the river, in the main business district. In fact it was a veritable fortress. Every building was a pillbox; every wall was a fortification. The streets were mined and barricaded and covered by antitank guns placed in buildings or in pillboxes at the intersections. Artillery pieces had been placed on the upper stories of buildings so that they could fire on troops advancing down the main thoroughfares. In particular the Japanese were entrenched behind

the thick stone walls of Intramuros, the ancient Walled City of the Spaniards.

Oddly enough the main part of the Japanese force was naval—16,000 naval troops reinforced by 5,000 Army. There was also a suicide boat group with some three dozen boats which were to be used against Allied ships that tried to enter the harbor. Commanding all this was Rear Admiral Mitsuji Iwabuchi.

By midnight of February 5 both the 1st Cavalry and the 37th Division stood on the northern bank of the Pasig. Behind them the whine of the sniper bullet mingled with the crackle of flames as the Japanese fought on from isolated pockets. Most of the resistance north of the river had been in the form of a delaying action. Small suicidal detachments manned machine guns at street intersections, in pillboxes, and in houses. Riflemen sniped from housetops. Japanese demolition teams deliberately fired the city. All the bridges across the Pasig lay broken and smashed. The approach areas had all been mined.

But there was joy too in Manila that day, for both San Tomas University with 3,521 internes and old Bilibid Prison with 1,024 prisoners of war and internees had been liberated.

The XIV Corps commander, Major General Oscar W. Griswold, ordered the 1st Cavalry to make an envelopment to the east, in order to seize important installations of the Manila water system, while the 37th Division drove straight ahead into the enemy.

On February 7 the 37th Division made an assault crossing of the Pasig River near Malacanan Palace, the White House of the Philippines. After a devastating artillery bombardment which reduced enemy resistance to sporadic small-arms fire, a footbridge was thrown across the river. Soon this was replaced by a pontoon bridge capable of carrying the division's heavy equipment. By the next day the division held a bridgehead on the south bank a mile deep and well over a mile wide.

For the next ten days the encircled Japanese were squeezed tighter and tighter until they were compressed into Intramuros and the south port area. While the 11th Airborne held a line southeast of the city, the 37th Division and the 1st Cavalry Brigade edged forward pillbox by pillbox, building by building, street by street. The fighting for the Manila Hotel exemplified the fighting in Manila in all its bitterness, in all its fury, in all its tenacity. American troops entered the lobby of the hotel in the morning of February 21 and immediately came under fire from enemy small arms and automatic weapons located on the second floor. For almost three days

the battle raged. Many times the Japanese made suicidal attacks from one floor to the next. One trapped pocket held out for 24 hours on the mezzanine. Finally on February 23 the hotel was taken.

North of the Manila Hotel lay Intramuros. The Old City was well named, for its wall were 15 feet high, 8 to 20 feet thick at the top, and 20 to 40 feet thick at the base. Knowing that within Intramuros were many women and children and other nonbelligerents, General Griswold sent the following message to the Japanese commander:

"Your situation is hopeless—your defeat inevitable. I offer you honorable surrender. If you decide to accept, raise a large Filipino flag over the Red Cross flag now flying and send an unarmed emissary with a white flag to our lines. This must be done within four hours or I am coming in. In the event you do not accept my offer, I exhort you that true to the spirit of the Bushido and the Code of the Samurai you permit all civilians to evacuate the Intramuros by the Victoria Gate without delay in order that no innocent blood be shed."

There was no reply. The attack was begun.

Using direct fire heavy artillery knocked two huge holes in the old Spanish wall. At 7:30 on the morning of February 23, after a murderous bombardment by all manner of howitzer and mortar and gun, three regiments closed for the kill. The 129th Infantry went through the north wall, the 145th Infantry went through the east, while the 12th Cavalry struck north through the port area. Stumbling over rubble and fighting through flame and smoke the Americans by the next day had annihilated the Japanese in Intramuros.

Organized resistance in Manila had ended except for three last strongholds—the Agricultural, the Finance, and the Legislative Buildings. There for eight more days the barricaded Japanese fought savagely—and well. It was not until March 4 that the last Japanese was killed. In the ruins of the Agricultural Building lay the body of Admiral Iwabuchi.

Thus ended the Battle of Manila. Over 16,000 Japanese were counted dead. Many others were buried forever in the mass of rubble that was Intramuros.

IO

The day after the invasion at Lingayen three submarines left Guam. They were ARCHERFISH, BLACKFISH, and BATFISH, known collectively as "Joe's Jugheads" (after Commander Joseph F. Enright, skipper of ARCHERFISH and officer in tactical command of the group).

Heading west by north they passed through the Luzon Strait into the China Sea along the route that the Third Fleet had trampled only a few days before. Halsey and his ships were still there, in that nearly landlocked sea, scorching the coast of Asia from Saigon to Hong Kong.

Some days after the three submarines had taken up their patrol beat off the Chinese island of Hainan, *BATFISH* surfaced near a couple of dozen junks. The skipper of the sub, Commander John K. Fyfe, thought that the Japanese, their merchant ships either sunk or forced from the seas, might be using the junks to carry dribblets of men and material up and down the harassed coast.

After one junk was fired on and hit, the others hove to. Fyfe, in his log, then continues the story: "Sent boarding parties aboard four. Harmless Chinese fishermen, most boats having whole families—men, women, children, and even babies—aboard. Nothing but a few days' catch of fish of various and unappetizing types. Gave them a little bread, beans, and rice for the scare we had given them.

"Went to junk hit. After many bows, lots of sign language, found out they weren't so concerned about their damaged boat (several holes in the hull, one mast shot down, rigging partially demolished) or that two men had been shot, but that they wanted help fixing up the wounds. Sent the Pharmacist's Mate over to take his practical factor for CPO [chief petty officer]. He had two good patients and I'll never forget the demonstration I had of plain intestinal fortitude. One, an old man, had a wound in his thigh and didn't even flicker an eyelash while it was being treated. The other had two wounds, one in his back and one in his arm, but he was the most active person aboard. We stocked their larder with cigarettes, beans, and rice and parted the best of friends."

There followed days of routine patrol: once some downed aviators were searched for but not found, once a small freighter was attacked but the torpedoes went under and the surprised Jap lived to see another day. Then *BATFISH* was ordered back to Luzon Strait to join four other subs in patrolling that area.

It was a week later, on February 9, while patrolling in Babuyan Channel off the northern tip of Luzon, that *BATFISH* got her first contact. Radar picked up a target about an hour before midnight and *BATFISH* began tracking. It was a very dark night, partially overcast and no moon.

Forty minutes later all was in readiness.

"Fire!"

With a deadly burp and a bubbling hiss a torpedo droned through the black water. Then another and another and another . . .

All missed. Four "end of run" explosions shook the night.

Fyfe decided to try again and started an end-around maneuver. He could not see the target but thought it was a submarine. To make certain he decided to close to visual range.

At one minute past midnight Fyfe's beliefs were confirmed. It *was* a submarine of the Japanese I class and it was just about a half a mile away. From the conning tower of his surfaced craft Fyfe could clearly see it.

A minute later two more torpedoes streaked through the water. A hit! A brilliant red explosion lit up the whole sky and the unlucky Jap sank almost immediately. The second torpedo passed over the spot where the submarine had been only seconds before. The soundman on *BATFISH* reported that he heard loud breaking-up noises as the Jap undersea craft went under for the last time.

The sea around *BATFISH* was coated with heavy slicks and there was a strong smell of oil in the air. The *BATFISH* swept the area with her searchlight, for Fyfe "wanted to pick up a Nip submariner to see what makes him tick." But there was nothing left alive from that ship. Soon the searchlight was switched off since Fyfe thought it was too much like "advertising."

The next morning *BATFISH* herself had a close call.

While lolling about slightly below the surface she sighted a Black Cat search plane and four fighters flying low to investigate the slick. They had probably flown up from Lingayen Gulf on routine patrol.

While taking a look through the periscope, Fyfe "heard a torpedo on the port beam." He immediately dove his sub deep. The torpedo passed overhead and went away.

"A tender moment," logged Fyfe, "and if these actually prove to be blue [American] planes, a very unfriendly act."

The Fates had better things in store for *BATFISH* than to be sunk by an erring American flier.

A couple of nights later, in the same general vicinity, *BATFISH* picked up another target on her radar. Since it was even darker than the night of the first attack and since he had found out how ineffective Jap radar was, Fyfe decided to make a surface attack if possible.

At 10:37 P.M. men on the blacked-out bridge sighted the target at about 1,300 yards low in the water. It was another sub.

But before torpedoes could be readied, the Nip dived.

Fyfe was still describing his disappointment in salty monologue when, fifteen minutes later, the men on the bridge heard a swishing noise like a sub blowing its ballast tanks. And that was just what it turned out to be, for a few minutes later the enemy sub popped to the surface like a winded whale.

The BATFISH submerged and started after her

Then at two minutes after ten the four forward torpedoes were sped on their merry way. Fifty seconds later the first hit. The Jap sub literally blew apart and sank almost immediately. Then two more muffled hits and two loud internal explosions.

The whole eruption was capped by one last very loud explosion that shook BATFISH from bow planes to stern tubes. At first Fyfe thought it was a close bomb but soon he realized it was "the swan song of one Nip sub."

By all rights BATFISH should have been happy and contented with her tally of two Jap subs on one war patrol. But the next night she again got radar contact with what "looked like another submarine."

At 2:27 A.M. battle stations were sounded and BATFISH submerged to begin her approach. Before she had closed to torpedo range, however, the Nip too decided to take a dive.

For over an hour BATFISH waited maneuvering carefully in the darkness. Perhaps the Jap had seen him, thought Fyfe. Perhaps the Jap was making an approach on him now. A thin film of perspiration formed on his forehead.

No! There he was again on the surface.

Fyfe maneuvered his submarine into an approach. The strong tide rips made depth control very difficult.

This time three torpedoes were fired. As before, the first one hit and the enemy sub sank immediately. On the radar screen the Jap was seen to blow apart and through the telescope Fyfe saw a large yellow ball of fire.

The next morning when BATFISH surfaced to look over the debris no survivors could be seen—only bits of wood and paper and lots of oil. A wooden box floated by and was picked up. It contained Japanese navigation equipment and a book of tables.

"From positions listed in the work book," logged Fyfe, "it looks like

this guy went from Nagoya to Formosa before he headed down toward Luzon to join his ancestors."

The BATFISH had indeed established a record. The Pacific's top submariner, Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, Jr., commented: "BATFISH sank her third enemy submarine within four days.¹ What monotony!"

¹ They were RO 112, RO 113 and RO 55, all coastal types. The first two displaced 500 tons surfaced and had a complement of 38 men. The latter displaced 950 tons and carried 62 men. These unfortunate three were joined by yet another when, on February 14, ARCHERFISH bagged a submarine east of Formosa, boosting the group record to four submarines in five days.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Darkness Remembered

[I]

Corregidor needs no comment from me. It has sounded its own story at the mouth of its guns. It has scrolled its own epitaph on enemy tablets. But through the bloody haze of its last reverberating shot, I shall always seem to see a vision of grim, gaunt, ghastly men, unafraid.

Douglas MacArthur

CORREGIDOR and its four supporting islands—Caballo, Carabao, El Fraile and Monja, form the teeth in the mouth of Manila Bay. Stringing from Mariveles Harbor on the southern tip of mountainous Bataan peninsula to Cavite on the opposite shore, they are a formidable sea block at the entrance to the bay. Corregidor, shaped like a tadpole with its bulbous head toward the China Sea and its long tail curving toward Manila, is the largest. Its strategic value was recognized by the Japanese in 1945 as it had been by the Americans before 1941, and by the Spanish captains three hundred years before that. There are two channels into the bay, one to the north between Corregidor and Bataan and one to the south between Corregidor and the island of El Fraile near Cavite's shore.

There is a romantic legend which tells of the naming of Mariveles Harbor, Corregidor, and the satellite islands, a story of frustrated love complete except for the traditional curse on the scene which does, in fact, seem to guide its destiny.

Early in the eighteenth century a prominent family by the name of Velez migrated to Manila from Mexico, the story goes. The Velez family had, of course, an extremely beautiful daughter, Maria, who inevitably fell in love with a handsome young man of whom her parents did not approve. They eloped, planning to board an outward-bound Spanish galleon at the mouth of Manila Bay. But the ship was delayed and the pursuit, spurred by promise of rich reward, was hot. On the Bataan coast, waiting in desperate hope for the tardy ship, the runaway couple was

apprehended by a *corregidor*, literally a "corrector" or district law-enforcement officer. When captured, the girl was mounted on a horse, the young man on a water buffalo, or carabao.

Their love thwarted, the couple retired to religious seclusion. The sympathetic populace, as a monument to blighted romance, named the Bataan hills and harbor for Maria Velez, which in time was contracted to "Mariveles." And the islands across the mouth of the bay also got their names from the incident: Corregidor for corrector or alderman; Caballo for horse; Carabao for water buffalo; Fraile for monk, and Monja for nun. Only the name of the swain is not commemorated.

2

First used as a semaphore signal outpost to warn Manila of approaching hostile ships, particularly Moro pirates, Corregidor with its precipitous cliffs early became linked with the defenses of Manila. But it was not until shortly before the Spanish-American War that The Rock was actually fortified. The Spanish installed three large cannons, 12 feet long and able to shoot their 8- and 10-inch projectiles more than a mile, a considerable distance in those days.

These guns, plus the batteries on El Fraile, Caballo, and the tip of Bataan, were supposed to cripple any enemy ship that might attempt to force entrance into the bay. Then three ships, each manned by eighty sailors, would sweep down on the wounded enemy and dispose of her.

The plan didn't work. On the night of April 30-May 1, 1898, Admiral Dewey took the six ships of his Asiatic Squadron between Corregidor and El Fraile into Manila Bay by night. Admiral Montojo's fleet of seven ships was located near Cavite Naval Yard. By noon all were sunk. Not one American sailor was killed in the action.

Cavite was quickly surrendered when a few rounds from the American ships passed through the dining room of the commandant's residencia. The Spanish flag was immediately lowered and a white flag run up. The next day Corregidor itself was surrendered and Dewey stood firmly astride Manila Bay.

In December of that year the Philippines were formally ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Paris. It was the Americans who then built on Corregidor one of the most elaborate defense systems of that day.

Big 10-inch and 12-inch guns, forged in the glowing heat of America's

new steel industries, were placed in thick concrete pits and, from these hard-cased nests, frowned out from Corregidor over the channels between Bataan to the north and Cavite to the south. These batteries on Topside, as the high ground above the cliffs was called, had resonant, ringing military names: Battery Wheeler, Battery Cheney, Battery Crockett, Battery Hearn, Battery Grubbs, Battery Ramsey, Battery Morrison, Battery Geary, Battery Way.

Laid out on the high level ground Topside was the Army post with its neat, green parade ground surrounded by white buildings. Bougain-villaea and hibiscus bloomed in the gardens.

Ordnance shops were built underground. Famed Malinta Tunnel, at the neck of the island, was cut out of solid rock and served as a great shell-proof storehouse.

Corregidor was in every sense of the word a fort.

But once the guns were installed, treaties and lack of appropriations combined to keep The Rock an anachronism. On December 7, 1941, the fortifications were little different from what they had been at the turn of the century.

3

The first volume of BATTLE REPORT describes the tenacious, bloody defense of Bataan and Corregidor where Americans and Filipinos had retreated after fighting bitter delaying actions against the rushing Japanese. It was all a part of the plan to hold off the Japanese until a relief expedition could lift the siege. But control of the seas had been lost at Pearl Harbor and that aid never came.

Here in the jungles of Bataan and amid the cliffs and rocks of Corregidor men fought battles that gave hope to the free world. For long dark months in a far corner of the Pacific a little group of men and women stood firm against the bloody tide of conquest. But they could not stand forever. Twelve thousand hungry men stood alone on Corregidor opposing the entire 14th Japanese Army. From Bataan, only two miles to the north, Japanese 240mm guns pounded the little island while from the air thundered tons of bombs. It seemed as if the small island would crumble into the sea.

On May 4, 1941, the tempo of the attack increased. Within twenty-four hours an estimated 16,000 shells rained in on the island. Aircraft

bombed for the 294th time. Communications were almost completely disrupted. Beach defense installations were blasted to sand. The very topography of the island changed under the shocked eyes of the defenders. Ravines, once jungles, were denuded to the last blade of grass. Hills became depressions, and depressions filled with landslides.

Two hours before midnight on May 5 the Japanese landed on the north shore of the island, between Infantry and Cavalry Points.

At point-blank range the American beach guns smashed at the invasion barges. Over two-thirds were sunk, but the Japanese pressed on and by 3:00 A.M. had carved out a beachhead 50 yards deep. It was later found that most of the 5,000 Japanese killed in the taking of Corregidor died during those first five hours.

Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright, left in command of Corregidor and the Philippines, was faced with a most difficult decision. His troops were pinned to the ground by strafing planes and showering shells. Shell-shock cases were so common that no attempt could be made to hospitalize them. Only a few mouthfuls of water were left on the satellite islands. On Corregidor there was only enough water for three more days. In the smoke and dust of the tunnels, 1,500 patients lay in crowded, improvised hospitals. Enemy artillery rattled like machine guns. Tanks had been landed. It was clear that before dark the Japanese would be on the island in sufficient force to slaughter the defenders.

At 10:00 A.M. Wainwright, himself deafened by a shell explosion, sent for Brigadier General Lewis C. Beebe, his chief of staff, and Major General George F. Moore, who commanded the Manila Harbor defenses.

"We can't hold out very much longer," said Wainwright. "Maybe we could last through this day, but the end certainly must come tonight. It will be better to clear up the situation now, in daylight."

So it was on May 6, 1942, nearly five months after the Japanese invaded Luzon and on the twenty-seventh day of the siege, that Wainwright sent word from his tunnel headquarters telling all units to prepare for surrender. All weapons larger than 45-caliber were to be destroyed before noon along with equipment, supplies, the two trucks that could still run, and the few boats that still floated.

Thirty minutes later General Beebe spoke into the microphone that had relayed the "Voice of Freedom."

"Message for General Homma . . . message for General Homma, or the present Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces on

Luzon. Anyone receiving this message please transmit it to the Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces on Luzon.

"For military reasons which General Wainwright considers sufficient, and to put a stop to further sacrifice of human life, the Commanding General will surrender to Your Excellency today the four fortified islands at the entrance to Manila Bay . . ."

The surrender message was then rebroadcast in Japanese. But the shelling and ground attack continued.

Between repetitions of the surrender broadcast Wainwright radioed his last message to MacArthur and to President Roosevelt, summing up the reasons for his action and saying good-bye.

(In the dusty recess of a tunnel a radio operator keyed out his last thoughts to the world: *"They are not near yet. We are waiting for God only knows . . . We may have to give up by noon . . . They have been shelling us faster than we can count . . . I'm really low down. They are around now smashing rifles. They bring in the wounded every minute. We will be waiting for you guys to help. This is the only thing I guess can be done. General Wainwright is a right guy and we are willing to go on for him, but shells are dropping all night, faster than hell. Damage terrific. Too much for guys to take . . . They have got us all around and from the skies. From here it looks like firing ceased on both sides. Men are all feeling bad . . . Corregidor used to be a nice place. But it is haunted now . . . Just made a broadcast to arrange for surrender . . . I can't say much. Can't think at all . . . The jig is up. Everyone is bawling like a baby . . ."*)

At noon the white flag of surrender was slowly hauled to the top of Corregidor's flagpole.

Not for an hour did Japanese fire slacken. Then two Marines, Captain Golland L. Clark and First Lieutenant Allen S. Manning, walked to the Japanese lines under a flag of truce. In thirty minutes they returned to Malinta Tunnel with a message directing Wainwright to come to the Japanese Commander if he wanted to discuss terms.

General Wainwright and his party then proceeded by car to the enemy lines. Arrangements were made for the party to be taken to Bataan to meet General Homma. As they started for the dock on foot Japanese ground fire suddenly opened up on the area just ahead of the party and dive bombers strafed the area between the party and the dock.

General Wainwright reached Cabcaben, Bataan, at 4:00 P.M. just as

the Japanese moved toward Malinta Tunnel¹ and occupied Bottomside. He and his party were taken to a house about a quarter of a mile away where Homma had his headquarters. The Japanese kept the party waiting an hour and offered them only a little water. None had eaten for over twenty hours. During the wait they lined up on the steps for Japanese cameramen to take pictures.

Homma finally arrived in a shiny Cadillac. Returning General Wainwright's salute with a vague flourish of his hand, he mounted the steps and took the center seat behind the table.

Wainwright and his party were seated opposite the Japanese. The surrender document, already signed, was handed by Wainwright to Homma. The Japanese General, without looking at it, although he could speak English, handed it to his interpreter who read it aloud in Japanese.

General Homma replied through his interpreter that no surrender would be acceptable unless it included all the American and Filipino troops in the Philippines. General Wainwright insisted that his command included only the troops on the fortified islands and some small garrisons in northern Luzon. He explained that those in the Visayas and on Mindanao had been transferred to the command of Brigadier General William F. Sharp, who was responsible directly to General MacArthur. (Wainwright had radioed the transfer orders only that morning.)

Homma replied sharply: "Hostilities against the fortified islands will be continued unless the Japanese surrender terms are accepted."

When General Wainwright continued his argument, Homma jumped up from the table, strode angrily and haughtily to his car, and drove off.

The Americans got up and walked slowly down the steps. The Japanese colonel who had brought them from Corregidor was with them.

"What do we do now?" asked Wainwright.

"We will take you and your party back to Corregidor," replied the Japanese, "and you can do as you damn please."

The party was returned to their battered island and waded ashore. General Beebe, who was very ill, had to be carried. They made their way to the east entrance of Malinta Tunnel and found that the Japanese, despite the truce, had pushed their lines forward within a hundred yards of the entrance. Seeing this, Wainwright angrily ordered the interpreter to take him immediately to the senior Japanese commander.

The party walked around Malinta Hill to the west side and down to

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume I.

a small settlement called "Barrio San José." There in the ruined market place Wainwright met Colonel Denhichi Sato, the senior Japanese officer on Corregidor.

His men exposed on all sides to complete annihilation, Wainwright said that he was ready to meet the full demands of General Homma. At the Japanese Command Post a new document was typed up, and there, in the feeble candlelight, General Wainwright scribbled his signature. It was midnight of May 6, 1942.

The next afternoon as General Wainwright left Corregidor for Manila, the exhausted, hungry, wounded American soldiers, sailors, and Marines, now under Japanese guard, rose to salute. General Wainwright returned the salute with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Near the end of the month General Wainwright, while standing by a window of the University Club in Manila where he and many other officers were confined, saw his defeated troops trudging down Dewey Boulevard on their way to Bilibid Prison. Moved by their half-starved and ragged condition, Wainwright sent a plea to Homma, requesting him to radio President Roosevelt for a ship with food, clothes, and medical supplies.

Homma never answered.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Rock Regained

I

THIRTY-THREE MONTHS LATER . . .

Although the Philippines were not to be declared officially "liberated" until April 16, and would not be freed, in fact, of isolated enemy concentrations for three months more, the government of the Commonwealth had been restored to the Filipinos on February 27 after the recapture of the greater part of the city of Manila but while fierce fighting was still going on in Intramuros. Sergio Osmeña was the man who shouldered the responsibilities of the Philippine presidency. As vice-president he had followed his leader Manuel L. Quezon into exile. Theirs had been a long trek—from Manila to embattled Corregidor, then south to Australia with MacArthur, and finally to Washington. There the small group of Filipino leaders carried on, planning the reconstruction of their islands once they were free again. All the while Quezon was a very sick man. He finally succumbed to his disease, tuberculosis, three months before the American liberators returned to Philippine soil. It was Osmeña who, on that historic day October 20, 1944, waded ashore on Leyte with MacArthur and announced to the Filipinos that their liberation was at hand.

By the middle of February, 1945, as American troops closed Manila from the north and south, it became evident that if the city was to be used as a port it would be necessary to uncork the entrance to Manila Bay: Corregidor and the satellite islands had to be taken, Bataan peninsula and the Cavite shore to the south occupied.

The main block was, of course, Corregidor.

Enemy air had, by this time, been thoroughly swept from the skies. Opposition was expected mainly in the form of suicide boats and troops. Of the latter, 15,000, many of them service troops, were estimated to be on Bataan. Army intelligence had it that Corregidor was held by only 850, an unbelievably inaccurate estimate.

The plan called for an amphibious landing at Mariveles Bay, on the

southern tip of Bataan and only a silver dollar heave from The Rock. At the same time our troops would push south along Bataan's eastern shore to cut off retreat in that direction as well as to stop overwater evacuation from besieged Manila.

But before troops could be landed the waters that the ships had to traverse would have to be raked clean of mines. And mines there were aplenty. The Japanese had enriched their inheritance of the old U.S. minefields with new ones of their own.

The jobs of clearing the mine fields, seizing Mariveles Bay, and supporting the Corregidor assault fell to Rear Admiral Arthur D. Struble, who commanded the attack group, and Rear Admiral Russell S. Berkey, who commanded the fire support group. Recently captured Subic Bay, 30 miles north of Corregidor, was to be the base of operations.

The two admirals were given less than a week to prepare for the dual assault scheduled for February 15 and 16. Their orders were simple: first, sweep the seas to Mariveles; second, seize Mariveles; third, blast The Rock with crushing gunfire; fourth, seize Corregidor.

First, to sweep the mines . . .

"Until the mines were swept," recalled Admiral Berkey, "we were worried about moving the destroyers and cruisers in close enough to silence those Corregidor guns. Yet how could the minesweepers do their work well within range of those same coastal guns without being hit? It was a deadly dilemma.

"I went over the sweeping problem with the Minesweep King, Lieutenant Commander James R. Keefer. To do the job we had 15 YMS sweeps and six of the larger AM type which included Keefer's ship, the SAUNTER.¹ Keefer and I agreed that our task looked pretty grim, scooping mines out from under those gun muzzles."

¹ YMSs:

YMS 363 (Lt. William H. Nichols)
YMS 334 (Lt. Isadore A. Robbins)
YMS 336 (Lt. (jg) James G. McElroy)
YMS 364 (Lt. Charles K. Soper)
YMS 314 (Lt. George S. Hopps)
YMS 50 (Lt. Albert E. Bond)
YMS 48 (Lt. (jg) Howard A. Kaiser)
YMS 8 (Lt. (jg) Edward S. Conway)
YMS 6 (Lt. (jg) James H. Skog)
YMS 53 (Lt. (jg) Frank W. Ketner)
YMS 315 (Lt. Wilbur H. Boutell)
YMS 329 (Lt. William L. Ballew)

The sweeping operations here were not the largest of the war (an estimated 450 mines as compared to 1,000 in the Western Carolines) but the problems were probably tougher than any before. Not only would the sweepers be opposed by shore batteries at very short ranges; in some cases the mines were planted only 30 feet apart, and the large sweepers were 33 feet wide in the beam. This gave them the unhappy odds of destroying mines by hitting them, instead of cutting them.

"We decided to divide the mined areas into zones," continued Berkey. "The zones, being considered dangerous, were named after women."

Long before daylight February 13 the sweeps went to work. Starting from the 100-fathom curve the large AMs swept zones Audrey, Adelaide, and Karen cutting 28 old electrically controlled mines between La Monja and Corregidor, relics of U.S. Army days. YMSs swept the flanking areas Ruth and Mable but found nothing.

Meanwhile Berkey's cruisers and destroyers,² following the sweepers, blasted selected targets in Mariveles Bay, and the islands of Corregidor, Caballo, and El Fraile, which had been converted by the Army during the American occupation into a fort in the shape of a battleship. It was called Fort Drum.

Admiral Berkey's gunners had trouble distinguishing specific targets that first day, not only because of the pall of dust and smoke kicked up by Army Air Force heavy bomber strikes, but also because the enemy held his fire.

"What bothered me more than anything else," said Berkey, "was how to find the Jap guns and get them out of commission before the

YMS 335 (Lt. (jg) Richard C. Wilkins)
 YMS 339 (Lt. (jg) Maurice E. Fitzgerald)
 YMS 46 (Lt. (jg) C. Wayne Loree)

AMs:

SAUNTER (Lt. Comdr. James R. Keefer)
 SALUTE (Lt. Comdr. J. R. Hodges)
 SCOUT (Lt. Comdr. E. G. Anderson, Jr.)
 SCRIMMAGE (Lt. Comdr. Robert Van Winkle)
 SCUFFLE (Lt. Comdr. Erik A. Johnson)
 SENTRY (Lt. Comdr. Thomas R. Fonik)

² Berkey's Fire Support ships included five light cruisers, PHOENIX (Capt. Jack H. Duncan), BOISE (Capt. Willard M. Downes), DENVER (Capt. Alfred M. Bledsoe), CLEVELAND (Capt. Herbert G. Hopwood), MONTEPELIER (Capt. Harry D. Hoffman), and nine destroyers, HOPEWELL (Comdr. Warner S. Rodiman), NICHOLAS (Comdr. Robert T. S. Keith), TAYLOR (Comdr. Nicholas J. Frank, Jr.), O'BANNON (Lt. Comdr. James A. Pridemore), FLETCHER (Capt. Lawrence H. Martin), RADFORD (Lt. Comdr. Jack E. Mansfield), JENKINS (Comdr. Philip D. Gallery), LAVALLETTE (Comdr. Wells Thompson), ABBOTT (Lt. Comdr. Francis W. Ingling).

landing. The silence of the enemy guns gave us an uneasy feeling. We still had no idea of their strength after the first day. One thing that didn't worry us, however, was Jap air. For the first time in many months the AAF had complete control of the skies.

"That night we could hear across the water the rumble of the Army's big artillery and the sharp cracking echoes of rifle fire in the nearby hills as our troops rolled through Bataan."

Next morning, the day before the scheduled landing at Mariveles, the minesweepers moved into area Susie, the channel just south of Corregidor.

The Japs waited—and waited some more. They held fire until the first big sweep went past Corregidor. Then—BLAM!

"They were well shot at, but fortunately not shot up" was the way Berkeley put it.

Given a specific mark to shoot at, the sweepers and destroyers soon silenced the shore batteries that had revealed their location. For the rest of the day the Japs maintained a canny silence even though the plodding sweepers came within half a mile of The Rock.

Contact mines had been planted in Susie as thick as crab grass on a summer lawn. When cut from their moorings, they bobbed around like so many sea turtles sunning themselves on the surface. A couple of destroyers had been detailed as mine destroyers, but the job was too big for them. A hundred and ten mines popped to the surface that day. The destroyer CLAXTON at one time was completely surrounded.

The problem became so acute that PHOENIX's skipper, Captain Jack H. Duncan, sent his "bug" pilots—Lieutenants (jg) James M. Manheim, Herbert A. Starbird, Robert H. Smyth, and John Hunt—into the air to spot for the hemmed-in destroyers from the air.

The Manila Bay "Turtle Shoot" was not as spectacular as the Marianas "Turkey Shoot," but it was much noisier. Added to the gunfire were the ocean-shaking explosions of the destroyed mines. The rumbling from Susie lasted all day and stopped only when the evening twilight made mine hunting too risky.

In the afternoon five YMSs supported by the destroyers HOPEWELL and FLETCHER were sent to clean up Helen, the area north of Corregidor. Three enemy guns, concealed by the hills from the fire support ships, opened up and quickly scored seven hits on the YMS 48. Badly damaged, she had to be sunk.

The YMS following the 48 cockily queried over the radio telephone: "Shall I continue to sweep?"

"Hell no! Get out of there!" yelled Berkey in welcomed reply.

Lieutenant (jg) Howard A. Kaiser, skipper of YMS 48, tells of his predicament:

"Unfortunately at the time we abandoned ship, the current set was toward Mariveles Harbor and toward the Bataan shore, which was held by the Japanese. We were in so close we had to dodge sniper fire. We could see Japs running around on the beach and darting through the jungles. We hoped that we would drift out to sea rather than drift into that hostile beach.

"About 45 minutes after abandoning ship the destroyer HOPEWELL came in to attempt our rescue. She was hit four times between the stacks by the same batteries that hit us and apparently suffered considerable damage because she turned and headed for sea before she had rescued any of my men.

"Soon six A-20s [twin-engined attack bombers] appeared from Clark Field and laid a beautiful smoke screen between us and those Corregidor guns, enabling the FLETCHER, although she too had been previously hit by the same battery, to slip in and pick us up.

"That smoke screen was about the most welcome sight that any of us had ever seen in our lives, even better than a steak dinner. We would have danced a clog if we had had a deck to stand on."

Admiral Berkey continues the story: "With two cans hit and one YMS sunk, I ordered the cruisers and destroyers to give them all we had. In seven minutes they poured 8,000 rounds of shells into Corregidor and not another shot was fired by the Japs from the north side of that island."

Berkey then told Keefer to reorganize his sweepers and get Mariveles Bay cleaned out. Struble was due the next morning with the landing force.

Mariveles was swept twice to a depth of 30 feet and so many mines popped to the surface that the destroyer LAVALLETTE was told to steam to the mouth of the bay and sink floaters going out with the tide.

Admiral Berkey watched LAVALLETTE as she cautiously crept into position. Suddenly a skull-shattering explosion shook the entire area and a geyser of water swallowed LAVALLETTE's bridge.

The RADFORD, steaming behind LAVALLETTE, put a boat in the water with a line to tie on the crippled can's fantail and WHAM!—RADFORD

had caught a mine in approximately the same place. The LAVALLETTE, damaged severely, was down by the bow but with fleet tug HDATSA's assistance she was able to steam out of the area and take refuge around the corner of Bataan in Subic Bay. These mines, it was discovered later, were electrically controlled from Bataan.

Berkey doubted if his ships would have enough ammunition to support the landing the next day, after all the firing in support of the mine-sweepers. That night he sent for his reserve fire support unit of three heavy cruisers and six destroyers.¹

Then Berkey steamed north to rendezvous with Struble's attack force. They met about midnight.

"I am doubtful if our ammunition supply will last past noon tomorrow," said Berkey over the TBS. "I've sent for the heavies and they should be down by that time. We have been unable to silence all The Rock's guns. Do you want to delay the landing until they arrive?"

"Let's go ahead," replied Struble from his miniature flagship, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter INGHAM.

2

Second, to land on Bataan at Mariveles . . .

Early on the morning of February 15 another check sweep was made of Mariveles Harbor. Then the assault waves formed up in column on the line of approach. On the left flank the destroyer PICKING (Commander Benedict J. Semmes, Jr.) stood guard and on the right the WICKES (Lieutenant Commander James B. Cresap). Like parading troops the boats entered the Harbor.²

Then from high on The Rock came a puff of brown smoke. Two destroyers, shelling nearby, elevated their guns less than half a degree and the Jap gun was smothered under an angry flurry of shells. Not another shot came from The Rock.

The 151st Infantry Regimental Combat Team and the 3rd Battalion

¹ Cruisers: HMAS SHROPSHIRE (Capt. C. A. G. Nichols, RN), PORTLAND (Capt. Thomas G. W. Settle), MINNEAPOLIS (Capt. Harry B. Slocum); Destroyers: CONWAY (Capt. Walter L. Dyer), EATON (Comdr. Chesford Brown), BRAINE (Comdr. William W. Fitts), FRAZIER (Comdr. Francis O. Fletcher, Jr.), HMAS ARUNTA (Comdr. A. E. Buchanan, RAN), HMAS WARRAMUNGA (Lt. Comdr. J. M. Alliston, RN).

² Admiral Struble's assault craft included his flagship the Coast Guard Cutter INGHAM (Capt. K. O. A. Zittel, USCG), 6 LCI(L)s, 5 LSTs, 6 LCTs, 20 LSMs, 25 LCMs. Inshore support provided by 2 PCs, 6 LCI(R)s, 6 LCS(L)s, Salvage craft and 6 destroyers also were present.

of the 34th Regimental Combat Team, totaling 4,300 men, were soon firmly ashore. By the end of the day Mariveles Town and airfield had been seized against light opposition. Quickly the 151st wheeled eastward to meet the 1st RCT that was pushing down Bataan's east coast against spotty opposition of Jap stragglers, most of whom were evacuees from Manila.

The only naval casualty of the Bataan landing that day was the LSM 169, which struck a mine. How the other vessels missed the many floaters was a great puzzle, for many mines were washed ashore for days afterward on the rocks rimming the harbor.

Admiral Berkey did not intend to press good luck too far and ordered his force put to sea that first night after the landing.

"It's still 'no man's land' as far as I'm concerned," he said. "My hunch is that the Nips will be waiting for us with some of those suicide boats."

And he was right.

The only ships left in Mariveles Bay were the three LSTs stuck on the beachhead and five LCSs guarding them. The LCSs—designated only by the numbers 7, 8, 26, 27, and 49—anchored 200 yards apart at the mouth of the harbor facing almost due west.

Five vessels at anchor, sitting ducks close to the beach: just the situation that the builders of Japan's "Maru 4 boats" had dreamed of. These Maru 4 boats, 15 feet of plywood, were driven by a Japanese version of a 6-cylinder Chevrolet engine. A coxswain, standing in the stern, manned the boat. The punch was furnished by 500 pounds of "Shimose" powder, a form of picric acid, stowed under the forward hatch.

In construction these boats were the same as those used at Lingayen. The difference was in the explosives. The Maru 4 boats butted into their targets, while the Lingayen boats—Army-manned and known as "Maru 2 boats"—kicked out with two depth charges aft which were often dropped with a delayed-action fuse.

The Japanese had five suicide boat units stationed near Corregidor. The normal complement of boats should have been 275 but losses during transport from Japan, poor engine upkeep (they rusted easily in the damp caves), and ineptness in the wiring of explosives (50 boats had been blown up in one explosion some months before) combined to whittle down the number of operable boats to 100.

On the night of February 16, when it was good and black, the Jap-

anese rolled some 30 of the dolly-mounted boats out of caves around the bay. Engines were started, albeit with some difficulty. Not only were the engines rusty but, as the Japanese later confessed, too many of the boat operators had bolstered their spirits with the bottled variety.

Some of the suicide coxswains still felt the divine urge, however, and about 3:00 A.M. the mosquito fleet struck. Weaving to avoid gunfire, the water-borne Kamikazes bored in against the five anchored craft, their coxswains screaming imprecations as they drew close. Owl-eyed radar picked up the little skimmers streaking across the water at 30 knots. LCS 27 opened the action. Her rattling, coughing guns quickly sank five of the boats, but a sixth exploded close aboard, badly damaging her.

"By the time our radar operators interpreted the signal," said Ensign D. C. Demeter of the LCS 7, "there wasn't much time for shooting. Not even time to man all guns. A few men on deck sighted small boats coming in fast from the east and the fight was on."

Demeter, himself standing a topside watch, grabbed a rifle and fired two shots before his magazine emptied. He had just fired two more shots from his .38 revolver when a blinding explosion knocked him unconscious.

"When I regained consciousness," continued Demeter, "the conn was a mass of wreckage. The entire port side and superstructure was ablaze. Our rockets were going off and ammunition was exploding all around. Men were lying about the decks moaning with burns and broken bones. The ship was sinking."

The scene was much the same all down the row of LCSs as one Maru 4 boat after another plowed into the harbor sentries. Blazing oil spread over the water and heavy black smoke obscured the harbor entrance.

The LCSs fired with their 20mms and 50-calibers—but it was too little and much too late. Three of them—the 7, 26, and 49—were sunk. The two others were beached and so severely damaged that they would have to miss the Corregidor show later in the morning. Nor could the fleet tug *HIDATSA* be around. She was heavily damaged by a mine as she tried to pull the LCS 27 off the beach.

3

Third, to blast The Rock . . .

The wounds of three years before had healed. The enveloping vegeta-

tion of the tropics had grown over the scars of the Japanese bombardment. There were jungles in the ravines again, until Berkey & Co. moved in.

So, again, The Rock was blasted, seared, scorched. Again the topography of the little island was beaten and pounded into a different shape. Within a two-day span Berkey's cruisers and destroyers and minesweepers had almost emptied their entire magazines at the island. In less than a month General Kenney's aircraft had rained over 3,000 tons of bombs on The Rock, most of them directed at Topside. Again jungles became deserts. Again small depressions grew into cave-ins and landslides. Again paved roads disintegrated and level areas became crater-pocked upheavals.

What had happened to Battery Way, to Battery Geary, to Battery Wheeler, to all the other batteries that had fought so hard and well three years before? Had they been restored by the Japanese? If so, how much punishment could they now take? Had the last of the batteries been finished off the day before when the two destroyers silenced the only battery on Corregidor that disputed the Mariveles landing?

The Americans took no chances.

At 7:00 A.M., February 16, Berkey's cruisers and destroyers moved in close and again started gouging The Rock with shellfire. From the sky P-38s and A-20s dropped down from all angles in intricate glide-bomb runs. Heavy bombers shook Topside with demolition bombs. No known cave entrance was left unfilled, no fortification was left unruptured. It was one of the most closely co-ordinated surface and air bombardments of the war, a thrilling exhibition of unified teamwork.

4

Fourth, to crack The Rock . . .

This was to be done by sowing paratroopers from the sky, hundreds of them, and smothering the Japs before they could blink their dust-filled eyes. Then they were to be kicked in the stomach by an amphibious landing.

The key to Corregidor was Topside. From the high terrain there the whole island could be dominated. To fight up the steep slopes from the beaches would have been very costly indeed. Too costly, even if only 850 troops were defending The Rock. So it was decided to take Topside from the air.

There wasn't much room Topside. Photographs showed only two suitable places for a drop: the parade ground, which measured 250 yards by 150 yards, and part of the golf course, 75 yards longer than the parade ground and of the same width. Hardly enough room to drop a battalion of men!

That wasn't all. These small fields were surrounded on three sides by splintered trees, tangled undergrowth, and wrecked buildings. On the fourth they sloped abruptly to the tips of sheer 500-foot cliffs. They were pockmarked with craters and littered with clods, rocks, bomb fragments, and torn tin roofing.

The Japanese commander on Corregidor took no precautions against an airborne invasion. He had been warned by headquarters to prepare for such an assault, but, after examining all possible areas in which paratroopers might be dropped, he ruled out the possibility of such an operation, even by the unpredictable Americans.

As the air and sea bombardment continued to keep the Japanese holed up in caves and tunnels of the honeycombed Rock, 31 C-47s took off from San José, Mindoro. Aboard them was the 3rd Battalion of the 503rd Parachute Infantry.

The planes approached Corregidor in two columns of single planes in train, one column for each landing zone. A sudden 18-mile-an-hour wind swept the air clear of the smoke and dust kicked up by the bombardment that had ceased only minutes before.

Promptly at 0830 the planes began to spill out their chutes—white, red, blue, green, yellow—bearing men and equipment down to the golf course and parade ground. Small groups of Japs, usually two or three men, fired machine guns and rifles at the planes and parachutes. A few planes and a few chutes were holed before escorting planes strafed them into quiescence.

The transport planes circled and came back, this time at 500 feet instead of 650 to cut down the dangerous drift. Again they dropped sticks of men and equipment.

The Japanese were surprised, stunned. The infantrymen who fell from the sky quickly occupied vital Topside positions. Many were battered and injured by their drop. A few were killed. Some missed Topside and dropped down the cliffs and into the ravines.

A good number of these paratroopers were very grateful to the PT 376, skippered by Lieutenant John A. Mapp. She was one of twelve such boats employed in the assault.

The "Spirit of '76" had been stationed at a strategic point off Corregidor with orders to pick up any of the parachuting soldiers who missed the flat top of the island. Patrolling about 30 yards off the beach, the PT spotted a group of paratroopers hiding from enemy fire that pelted down from above.

As the PTers put their rubber raft into the water they could see enemy tracer bullets plowing all around them. Under this angry buzz of fire they rowed ashore and rescued seven soldiers.

Then at 1250 another load of paratroopers, from 51 C-47s this time, floated down on Topside. Again some of them missed. Again the "Spirit of '76" went in under enemy shore fire and brought out ten more beleaguered paratroopers.

5

Meanwhile preparations were made to land the 3rd Battalion of the 34th Infantry—lifted from Mariveles in LCMs—on the south shore of Corregidor at San José south dock. The landing beaches chosen were at the foot of Malinta Hill, which bulges at the neck of the island, separating the head of the tadpole, Topside, from its stringy tail. It was essential that Malinta Hill be in our control before an assault was launched to clear the tail. The plan was to seize the Hill quickly, while the enemy was still dazed and confused by the bombardment and by the airborne attack on Topside.

Three destroyers—PICKING, WICKES, and YOUNG (Commander Donald G. Dockum)—moved to within half a mile of the shore smashing at the beaches and at Malinta's caves. As usual the approaches had to be swept for mines.

"All three sweepers resembled little bulldogs as they squatted low in the water and tossed their shells at the beach as rapidly as their guns would fire," remarked Commander Thomas R. Fonick. "Their 20mm guns were blazing and they raked everything in sight. They proved they could fight and sweep at the same time."

The YMS 46 was hit by a shore battery, but counterpunches came quickly from the three destroyers.

After the sweeps, rocket-launching LCI(R)s moved in to shower the beaches. The LCI(R) 338 was hit four times by 3-inch shells, but the stout little ship continued on in, fired her rocket barrage and then turning to strafe the beach with her automatic weapons.

At 1030 the troops hit the beach. Exploding land mines took heavy casualties but the soldiers pressed on to capture Malinta Hill. By the end of the day the assault phase of the battle for Corregidor was over. The enemy forces had been cut in two. The dominating terrain on the island was ours. Yet the long task of dislodging the enemy from the myriad caves and tunnels all over the island was to develop into some of the bloodiest fighting of the Luzon campaign.

The paratroop landings on Topside were a complete tactical surprise to the Japanese. Drop casualties in this dangerous operation had been expected, some estimates ran as high as 20 per cent. They turned out to be 11 per cent. Of 2,000 men dropped, 12 were killed and 267 injured or wounded in the operation.

For several days the paratroopers were supplied by air before contact was made with the forces landed in the dock area. The third battalion drop of the 503rd, scheduled for D-plus-1 morning was canceled, and the troops brought in by sea.

The Japanese may have had a good plan for defending The Rock but, whatever it was, it never saw action—so complete was the surprise. Nearly 6,000 Imperial troops defended Corregidor, much to the chagrin of the G-2 planners who estimated 850. Half of these were stationed on a defense ring along the shores of the island, half were holed up in Malinta Tunnel.

The Japanese had evidently expected an American landing on the north shore of the island—the same side, it will be recalled, that they had landed on in 1942—for there the beaches were found to be heavily mined. The Japs had also mined the approaches to the caves in the shore cliffs from which they planned to launch Maru 4 boat attacks.

Within a few days Japanese resistance was reduced to a series of death battles by isolated groups in the caves and tunnels, in the dugouts and old concrete magazines.

By the end of the month the Japs trapped in Malinta Tunnel set off a series of suicidal explosions which wrecked the interior of the labyrinth, entombing hundreds.

The 503rd, with two battalions abreast, had, by the second day of March, pushed through the toughest of terrain to the eastern end of the island.

The flies were as maddening as the Japanese. Big blue ones, corpse-fattened, buzzed and swarmed and stung.

"They were so thick," said one lieutenant, "that they showed up in aerial photos."

Except for small isolated pockets Japanese resistance was now over. Dead were an estimated 5,850 Japanese. Of these 1,014 were known to have died as they tried to escape by swimming to sea. American casualties had been well over a thousand, a third of these killed, out of approximately 4,000 troops committed.

The Japanese are tenacious, at least that can be said of them. The last Japs on Corregidor were not rounded up until the beginning of 1946. A combat patrol, by cutting through jungle and scaling cliffs, reached an area on the south side of the island where holdout Japanese were known to be hiding. Japanese war prisoners who had been taken along were made to write notes informing their comrades that the Emperor had ordered all Japanese to surrender. These notes were left scattered about in the area. Nearly two months later, on New Year's Day, 1946, some 20 ragged Japanese, carrying the notes, walked up to a Graves Registration sergeant and surrendered.

6

On March 2, while mopping up was still going on, MacArthur returned to Corregidor by the same means he had left thirty-six months before—in a PT boat. The triumphant squadron of "spitkits" was commanded by Lieutenant Henry S. Taylor, MacArthur's boat by Lieutenant Joseph Roberts.

Men of the 503rd were drawn up on the battered parade ground. Scattered shooting still jarred the island. Parachutes that had been used and discarded two weeks before still dotted Topside like collapsed balloons at a deserted circus ground.

Colonel George M. Jones, the assault commander, snapped his men to attention and saluted the approaching General.

MacArthur turned to the color guard at the base of the battered flagpole, a brand-new flag in hand.

"I see the old flagstaff still stands," said MacArthur. "Hoist the colors to its peak and let no enemy ever haul them down!"

MacArthur and his party then toured the whole island. At all times they were covered by soldiers with ready tommy guns. Near Battery Wheeler a lone Jap hiding deep in the recesses of a magazine was killed just as MacArthur was leaving.

The explosions in Malinta Tunnel had ceased by now and the General went in the east entrance far enough to see the burned and charred bodies of more than 200 Japanese. He gazed silently with an expressionless face.

Then shaking his head he said, "It was bad enough for us when we were here, but it was worse for them. They have set the pattern for their own annihilation."

He turned, kicked at a shell casing in his path, and walked out into the sunlight.

Once more The Rock was silent except for the wind rustling through the broken trees and the waves breaking against the jagged rocks. Once more The Rock was at peace.

7

Now there remained the three satellite islands of Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao.

Caballo, close by to the south, was even more rugged than Corregidor. After hard fighting over rocks and through ravines, the Japs were finally holed up in two reinforced-concrete mortar pits in the center of the island. It was next to impossible to dig the determined Japs out by ordinary methods. The weapon finally decided upon was a modernized version of the ancient "Greek fire." Navy pontoons were fitted on an LCM and filled with a mixture of diesel oil and gasoline. This was pumped into the mortar pits through a series of pipes and hoses. Then this was ignited by white phosphorous mortar shells after our troops had evacuated the island. The fire caused a tremendous series of underground explosions and when the island was reoccupied nearly a week later, on April 13, there was no more trouble from the Japanese. All 324 of them were dead.

Meanwhile a mockup of the main "deck" of El Fraile, or Fort Drum, the concrete battleship, was built on the parade ground Topside. Infantrymen and engineers rehearsed their attack plan, making sure of every detail. Commander Samuel H. Pattie readied his little eight landing craft task force for the assault.

At ten in the morning on April 13 an LSM came alongside Fort Drum pirate fashion. While scowl-like LCVPs pushed to hold the vessel against the concrete fort, a wooden ramp was dropped from the superstructure like a Roman drawbridge and down it raced the infantrymen.

Covered by machine guns and rifles the soldiers took hose lines to

Fort Drum's air vents, turrets, and hatchways. The Japanese who tried to come topside were sent scurrying back by point-blank fire.

Engineers soon had their oil mixture—3,200 gallons, to be exact—pumped into the old fort. Demolition men planted their 600 pounds of explosives exactly as had been rehearsed. A few Japs peeked out of a side turret and sniped a few shots: a sailor's neck nicked, a soldier's hand pierced, and Army commander Colonel Robert H. Soule's brow cut, were the only American casualties of the operation.

The sniper fire went unanswered. It was afraid the saturated "ship" would be ignited prematurely.

Then Commander Pattie's little task force withdrew and waited for the fireworks.

One charge going off sounded like a popgun. It was disappointing. Then Fort Drum really erupted. Debris geysered hundreds of feet into the air. Huge concrete hunks showered Manila Bay. Through the blasted holes reinforcing steel strips stuck up like pitchfork prongs. Smoke and fire billowed from the openings.

A great hunk of steel shot skyward. General Kenney, who was overhead at 2,500 feet watching the show, said: "I saw that heavy turret pass my plane, going up."

Fires raged on the island for the better part of a week. When our troops reoccupied, they found 60 Japanese dead. Uncounted bodies, of course, had been consumed by the flames.

On this same day landings were made on Carabao. The Japanese, however, had learned their lesson. The island was deserted.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Various Victors

I

AS GENERAL YAMASHITA and his 100,000 surviving troops were pushed deeper and deeper into the rugged mountains of northern Luzon, some attention could now be turned toward the excess population in the Southern and Central Philippines. Japanese hold on the archipelago had been definitely and completely shattered, but there remained the job of wringing every one of the numerous islands dry of the last invader. And more than that: beyond the Philippines to the south, the Indies were still well tenanted with soldiers of the Emperor who had to be dispossessed.

"Victor" and "Oboe" were the names given the two operations planned to that end. The *Victor Operation* was designed to destroy the remaining Japanese forces in Palawan, Sulu Archipelago, the Visayas, and Mindanao. The *Oboe Operation* called for the reoccupation of Borneo, Java, and the rest of the Netherlands East Indies.

Victor came first. The instruments used to implement the plan were Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet and Eichelberger's Eighth Army.

2

The lands that circle the Sulu Sea are known collectively as the Southwest Philippines and are made up of Palawan, the Sulu Archipelago, and the Zamboanga Peninsula of sprawling Mindanao Island.

Elongated Palawan was important only because of its geographical position—and even that importance was potential rather than actual. Lying like a breakwater between the Sulu and China Seas, Palawan dominates Balabac Strait to the south, and Mindoro and Linapacan Straits to the north. But of even more importance at this stage of the war was control of Palawan Passage, one of the major sea lanes of the Far East, between the reefs and shoals that fringe the island's west coast and the

vast unmapped labyrinth of rocks and sandbanks in the South China Sea marked on the charts simply as "Dangerous Ground." It was through this passage that Admiral Kurita's force had advanced during the initial stages of the Battle for Leyte Gulf.¹

There were several airstrips in the Palawan area, which, through disuse, had been swallowed by fast-growing tropical vegetation. But if the Japanese couldn't use them the Americans could—for putting air patrols over the South China Sea and Borneo.

Late in the afternoon of February 26, Admiral Bill Fechteler, Commander Amphibious Group Eight, steamed south from Mindoro with a force of eighty ships, most of them landing vessels of one kind or another. As big-gun support he had Rear Admiral Ralph S. Riggs's three cruisers and four destroyers. On board were 8,000 men of the 41st Division (Major General Jens A. Doe) and their first objective was the Puerto Princesa area, halfway down Palawan's east coast.

"Although we never anticipated much opposition in any of these landings," said Fechteler, "our plans of gunfire support were so thoroughly planned that we could counter any opposition that might develop."

And indeed this was true. The landing beach had been bombed by aircraft for two days. To this was added an hour and a half bombardment by surface ships and a 10-minute rocket barrage before the troops went ashore at 0845 on the last day of February. It didn't matter much, for there were no Japs around. In fact it was not until the second day that the first and lone Japanese was flushed.

Apparently the Japanese had fled into the hills at the approach of the convoy. It was evident that they had never intended defending Puerto Princesa. Except for the shattered airstrip, nothing that resembled military installations was found except air-raid shelters, and they were empty except for one gruesome and enraging discovery—the ashes of the 150 Americans who, soaked with gasoline, had been burned alive in the concrete vault two months before.

In the swabbing-up of the Palawans, American forces were never in contact with more than a hundred Japanese at a time, and when the casualties were counted the box score was heavily on our side: Americans, 12 killed, 56 wounded; Japanese, 890 killed, 20 captured. The rest of the Japanese, estimated at 1,800 before the landing, just weren't around.

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV.

3

"Oh, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga . . ."

Many an old Philippine hand had chanted the song, and now this peninsula, the western tail of Mindanao, was next on the Victor cleanup schedule.

Though attached by a narrow isthmus to the large island of Mindanao, the Zamboanga peninsula actually belongs geographically and economically to the Sulu Archipelago—the 370-odd islands, most of which are uninhabited and unimportant, that string southwest toward Borneo. In fact these islands are a semisubmerged continuation of the volcanic ridge which forms Zamboanga peninsula. The three major islands—those slated for invasion in a continuation of the Zamboanga operation—are Basilan, immediately across the strait from Zamboanga Town; Jolo, at the center of the chain; and Tawi Tawi in the extreme south, just 30 miles from the northeast tip of Borneo.

The importance of controlling the Zamboanga-Sulu area was obvious, for it truly is the crossroads of the Pacific, lying at the intersection of important sea lanes running south to the Indies and east and west between the Pacific and the South China Sea. Here are large and sheltered harbors, pirate haunts down to modern times. Tawi Tawi was a prewar American naval base, and during the war was much used by the Japanese. With the area firmly in American grasp we could then set up naval and air bases for the coming assault on Mindanao proper and for the projection of our forces into Borneo and the Indies.

The Zamboanga-Sulu area is completely different from the rest of the Philippines, for 90 per cent of its 250,000 inhabitants are Mohammedans. The Moros, as they are called—Spanish for Moors—are of the same Malay stock as the majority of the Filipinos, but are believed to be descended from a later immigration, after their mainland forebears had been converted to the teachings of the Prophet. Fiercely independent and separated from their Christian neighbors not only by their religion but also by dialect and the Arabic alphabet, they have long fought against any outside domination. For over three hundred years they were a headache to the Spanish. Then in 1898 the United States inherited the malady and it was not until 1913, after a long series of punitive expeditions, that the Americans succeeded in turning them to relatively peaceful ways.

The island of Jolo, known for its pearls, is the ancient seat of sultans

of Sulu. The reigning sultan had known the Americans before—in battle. He had once been the chief of a Moro band that was broken up in 1913 by General Pershing, who later became his close friend.

Nowhere in the Philippines did the Japanese encounter such bitter enemies as in the Sulu Group—and nowhere more willing and influential collaborators. The most steadfast haters of the invaders, and those who willingly risked their lives to carry messages and supplies to the guerrillas, were the black-toothed piratical sea gypsies who belong to the lowest economic class.

One real accomplishment of the Japanese during their 3-year occupation was to put an end to a peculiar and irksome Moro custom that for over forty years had plagued the Americans—the *juramentado*, better known by the polyglot term “running amuck.” Immediately after the occupation the Japanese called the local sultans, or *datos*, of the islands together and told them that the punishment for *juramentado* would be death to the children, parents, and grandparents of the Moro who ran wild slaughtering those in his path. This grim punishment had the desired effect and *juramentado* became a memory. The best the Americans had been able to do was to invent the 45-caliber pistol, which Army tradition has it was especially designed to stop Moros as no other handy weapon could.

4

It was Rear Admiral Forrest B. Royal, on loan from the Central Pacific, who headed up the Zamboanga Attack Group. With him was Rear Admiral Berkey, commanding a force of two cruisers—PHOENIX and BOISE—and six destroyers.

As usual the minesweeps moved in first, on March 8, and for two days swept the beach approaches in spite of machine-gun and artillery fire from shore. The bombardment ships cleared their throats and for the two days kept up a grim chant. For nine days the Thirteenth Air Force had hit at supply dumps and airdromes in Davao and Borneo, thus isolating Zamboanga, which itself received a good share of attention.

The first American invasion of the peninsula was not across the softened beaches, but far to the north, at Dipolog, at the end of the Mindanao Sea. Here never-say-die guerrilla forces held an airfield and between March 8 and March 10 two companies of the 24th Infantry

Division were landed by air to set up facilities for a fighter squadron which was to support the main Zamboanga push.

Then at 0915 on March 10, Admiral Royal from his flagship, ROCKY MOUNT, watched elements of the 41st Division (other units of which were still hunting Japs on Palawan) hit the beach. The LVTs carrying the initial waves were unable to climb the steep bank of loose rubble near the water's edge and had to veer off and wait for the following waves of LSMs and LCIs to bring in bulldozers to cut exits through the banks.

For half an hour the landing proceeded with less excitement than training exercises on a Virginia beach. Then the enemy moved in from the cover taken during the two-day bombardment, with machine guns, mortars, and artillery. Two LSTs, 591 and 626, and two LCIs, 710 and 779, were damaged. The fuel dump on the beach received a direct hit and burst into flames. Then the cruiser BOISE swung her guns against the Japanese positions. Shortly afterward, the landing was quietly resumed without further opposition. The troops fanned out quickly, and by late afternoon entered the town of Zamboanga, two and a half miles to the eastward. Once a beauty spot of the islands, Zamboanga Town had that day become a rutted ruin, razed by the retreating Japanese.

5

Marines too went ashore at Zamboanga. They were the men of two Marine Air Groups (12 and 32) under the command of Colonel Clayton Jerome. The combined unit was known as "Magszambo."

Without delay the flying leathernecks set up accommodations for their Corsairs and SBDs at a captured field promptly named after Colonel Paul Moret, a First Marine Wing staff officer killed in an air crash earlier in the war. When the enemy revealed himself entrenched in the hills surrounding the field by lobbing mortar fire in on the strip, the Marines decided to do something about it. In an operation reminiscent of Bloody Nose Ridge at Peleliu, Marine fighters, staged in from Leyte, took off, circled, bombed, and relanded without ever being out of sight of the field.

This was only the beginning. Before the campaign for the southern Philippines and Borneo was over, every front-line doughboy would swear that the Marines could drive tacks with their bombs.

6

While fighting was still going on in the hills behind Zamboanga Town, our forces began stepping down the Sulu Archipelago. Basilan Island, across the strait from Zamboanga, was invaded on March 16 and found to be empty of Japs. The enemy garrison, reported to be 500, was nowhere to be seen. It was found, however, that the island had previously been a base for small Japanese submarines.

Using three destroyers—SAUFLEY, WALLER, PHILIP—four minesweepers, and miscellaneous landing craft, Captain John D. Murphy lifted a battalion of troops from Zamboanga and put them ashore on Sanga-Sanga island in the Tawi Tawi group on April 2. Again no Japs were around. The only casualty was naval. The YMS 71 struck a mine and went down.

Next came Jolo, the center island of the Sulu chain and seat of the sultanate. A week before the landing was to take place scouts were put ashore from PT boats. Then on April 9 Captain Murphy landed elements of the 163rd Infantry (Colonel William J. Moroney) unopposed. Most of the Japanese—there were more than two thousand—had pulled back to the hills and it was at Mount Daho in particular that they had dug in. The flying Marines were called in to help.

The official Eighth Army report of the operation has this to say of Marine aviation: "The attack on Mount Daho afforded a classic example of effective air support bombing.

"The Japanese had developed the defensive potentials of the area over a period of months. Intrenchments, protective casements, caverns, and automatic gun positions blanketed Daho's slopes.

"Open, grassy approaches, crisscrossed by bands of automatic fire, made frontal infantry assault suicidal. To make matters worse, the artillery fire in support of the troops assaulting Mount Daho proved ineffectual because of the steep ravines which abounded, neutralizing the fire.

"From aerial reconnaissance it appeared that the terrain would be ideally suited for bombing missions. However, the terrain features proved to be so rugged that it required almost vertical bombing to be effective.

"Air support was requested and given by the Moret Field Marine Air Groups . . . the effect of the bombing on the final day was disastrous

to the Japanese. Their weapons were destroyed, their caverns were sealed, and 230 Japanese were slain. The surviving enemy forces were so completely demoralized that our troops were able to seize the position promptly . . ."

The Sulu Archipelago was ours.

7

In the very heart of the Philippines lie a group of islands known as the Southern Visayas, the four major islands being Panay, Negros, Cebu, and Bohol. For the Japanese on these islands, death was only a matter of time. They were in a huge trap, completely boxed in. Victorious Americans surrounded them—to the north on Luzon, to the east on Leyte and Samar, to the south in Zamboanga and the Sulu Archipelago, to the west on Palawan.

In the southern Visayas there were two important cities—Iloilo, on Panay, and Cebu City, on the heavily populated island of the same name. In fact Cebu City, with its 150,000 population and thriving industries, was the second city of the Philippines. When it was retaken, however, it was hardly more than a heap of stone and plaster rubble. What our bombers had missed the Japanese had destroyed. It was at Cebu City that many of the midget submarines that popped up in the middle of our Philippine convoys made their nest. Three of them were destroyed in the operation, one in its dock by Navy Venturas, two by the destroyers FLUSSER, CONYNGHAM, and NEWMAN. Not only did the Navy want to put an end to such annoyance, but those same docks and piers used by the midgets could be used by the ubiquitous, probing PTs and other small craft.

For several weeks Marine and Army fliers showered the islands, not only with bombs but also with leaflets. Hundreds of thousands fluttered down on Panay and Negros and over a million on Cebu. Many of them were instructions to Filipino civilians to move to safety and many of them were advices to the Japanese to surrender. The Filipinos followed their instructions but the Japanese, unfortunately for them, did not.

Panay came first. Only about 2,500 Japanese were thought to be on the island with only half of them combat troops. Most of the garrison had been thrown into the fighting on Leyte and lost. Since the guerrilla forces totaled 22,500 and since they controlled nine airstrips, serviced the roads,

and in fact, held the major part of the island, not much trouble with the Japs was expected.

It was Struble who turned up again as amphibious commander. This time his ships loaded the 40th Division (Major General Rapp Brush), which had been disengaged from fighting on Luzon, at Lingayen Gulf and transported them to the landing beach 20 miles west of Iloilo. Someone's face was red, no doubt, when it was discovered that the bombardment ships had shelled the wrong beaches, but it didn't make much difference since the Japs had pulled out anyway.

For the next two nights our ships illuminated the straits near Iloilo with star shells for fear that midget submarines and suicide craft might attack the beachhead, but none did.

By March 20, two days after the landing, our troops had taken Iloilo after being stopped temporarily by a tough group of Japs holed up in Molo Cathedral west of the city.

On the 29th the 185th Regimental Combat Team crossed the strait from Iloilo to Negros, where the Japanese were more numerous and more spirited. Tough hill fighting developed and once again the Marines, this time flying from Leyte, were on hand to slip their bombs down Nip throats. In all it took almost three months to kill 7,500 Imperial troops, twenty times the number of Americans who lost their lives.

The landing on Cebu was by no means dull. Using the cruisers PHOENIX and HMAS HOBART and four destroyers, Admiral Berkey, the bombardment king, gave the landing beaches five miles below Cebu City a thorough going-over. Then Captain Albert T. Sprague, Jr., who was Acting Commander Amphibious Group Eight—Admiral Fechteler having just been transferred—put the American Division ¹ ashore on the morning of March 26.

The Japanese had anticipated the Cebu landing area with accuracy, for the soldiers ran into the heaviest beach defenses encountered in the Philippines. There were antitank trenches and walls, chevaux-de-frise of sharply pointed bamboo sticks jutting up from the ground, steel rails, and, most effective of all, thickly sown mines most of which were improvised from shells, bombs, and torpedo warheads. Many of the assaulting LVTs

¹ The American Division was the only American division of the war to be formed on foreign soil and was the only American division without a numerical designation. It was activated on May 27, 1942, on New Caledonia and afterwards participated in fighting on Guadalcanal, where many of its units received Navy Unit Citations, on Bougainville, and on Leyte.

were disabled or destroyed and the first five waves ashore soon piled up on each other. Fortunately under the naval and air bombardment the Japanese had pulled back from the beaches and were in no position to fire into the Americans huddled on the sands between minefield and water. It was some hours before the troops could get through the minefields and start for Cebu City.

The city was occupied the day after the landings, and the Japanese were pushed back into the hills. Destroyers lying offshore delivered call-fire against Japanese strong points and gun positions. The gun crew of the merchant ship SS MICHAEL J. OWENS, tied up to the Cebu docks, had the unique experience of being called on to silence an enemy battery with the 5-inch guns on the merchantman's stern. This they did with dispatch and glee.

The Japanese on Cebu, as elsewhere, were masters of improvisation. After a low-level strike by some of our planes the pilots returned to their base and reported, rather bewilderedly, that the Japanese had shot at them with mortars but their planes had been damaged by—of all things—rocks!

Later it was discovered that the Japanese had revived the old "thundermug." A piece of iron pipe had been set vertically in a concrete block and an explosive charge placed in the bottom. Then the pipe was filled with rocks. When the planes passed over, the charge was set off and the rocks sprayed up in front of the planes.

The hill fighting was tough on Cebu and Negros and it was not until the middle of June that the Japanese were finally cleaned up. Bohol, meanwhile, had been easily cleared of its 100-odd Japs.

With these victories in the southern Vasayas the only area in the Philippines still left to the Japanese was Mindanao.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Philippines Regained

I

THE JOB of tidying up the Philippines continued long after the last island had been invested. In the jungles and the mountains, through the swamps and among the hidden caves, the grim hunt went on while the smoldering islands were being readied to support the coming invasion of Japan. To this end salvage work in Manila Bay was pressed. And it was Herculean task indeed, this clearing of the sunken wrecks, estimated to be three times as big a job as the clearing of the French port of Cherbourg, which had been thoroughly messed up by anybody's standards. Before May Day a total of 195 ships had been raised. The Third Fleet fliers had done their work well, much to the despair of the sweating salvage crews.

Theirs was not the only drudgery. There were still many mines to be swept. In Manila Bay, for example, three Liberty ships were damaged by mines in an area that had supposedly been cleared. The little minesweepers worked hard. Always in the van when a landing was to be made, they now toiled in less dramatic but no less dangerous labors. PT boats probed and snooped, firing on anything ashore or afloat that faintly resembled a Japanese.

Landings were made here and there and everywhere—at places that Americans had never heard of before; places that were quickly forgotten: Burias, Simara, Romblon, Balabac, Busanga, Dumaguete, Catanduanes, Legaspi. Sometimes Japanese were found, sometimes they weren't. Most of the time the Filipinos cheered and waved their homemade flags. But sometimes they were bitter and threw stones when they thought that the Americans, attempting to flush out Japanese with bomb and shell, had unnecessarily destroyed their towns.

The last big push was against Mindanao.

2

Mindanao is a big island, larger than the state of Indiana. In fact it amounts to about one-third of the land area of the entire Philippines. Its

terrain varies, but for the most part is mountainous and covered with rain forest. Much of the interior has never been explored. Davao, however, with its 95,000 people, was one of the principal cities of the Philippines. It was in this area that the Japanese started infiltrating before World War I. Some twenty-seven years later, when the armies of the Emperor overran the archipelago, the Davao Japanese numbered close to 19,000, and their economic grip on the city was absolute. Davao is a great hemp center and most of the Manila hemp used in the United States came from there. The industry was controlled almost entirely by the Davao Japanese. Ironically the lines used aboard the very ships that were cutting the last fibers of the Japanese Empire had themselves been purchased from Japanese.

The guerrilla organization on Mindanao was one of the best in the Philippines. Its commander was Colonel Wendell W. Fertig, formerly a mining engineer in the Philippines who had fought on Bataan and in March, 1942, had been evacuated to Mindanao to build airfields there. When the Philippines fell, he became a guerrilla and soon had collected around him many Americans, both military and civilian, and a large number of Filipinos.

Supplies were first brought in to the guerrillas by submarine in February, 1943, and from then on kept arriving regularly. At first submarines were the only carriers but later airplanes and small landing craft were used.

By 1945 Fertig had organized and equipped five divisions, totaling 25,000 men, and controlled 95 per cent of the island. The Japanese were confined to the main coastal cities, the roads, and the waterways. Aided by two LCSs and two LCIs lent by Admiral Kinkaid, as will be related later, Fertig and his men had even conducted an amphibious operation against Talisayan on the north coast.

The Japanese on Mindanao were estimated to number some 30,000 but, as it turned out, this figure also had been an underestimate and the total was closer to 50,000. But when Rear Admiral Arthur G. Noble on April 17 put the 24th and 31st Infantry Divisions ashore on the south shore of Mindanao at Malagang and Parang there were no Japs around at all. Except for a few stragglers, the guerrillas had cleared the coastal area of the invaders.

The sweaty job of pushing across the island to Davao Gulf was begun. The lack of adequate roads on Mindanao and the possibility of road blocks and blown bridges resulted in a most unusual maneuver. The 533rd

Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, using landing craft, gunboats, and assorted amphibious vehicles, formed up a pint-sized fresh-water fleet and pushed up the Mindanao River. Several times Japanese strong points were encountered along the bank, attacked, and the enemy dispersed. The river, however, played a dirty trick on the web-footed engineers when, about a week later, it suddenly receded after the manner of rain-fed tropical streams.

The PGMs and LCI(G)s stranded, and the soldiers went back to the infantryman's normal transportation—shoe leather.

Another week of this, and the 24th Division reached Davao Gulf. From there it swung north to capture Davao City itself—what was left of it. American bombings and Japanese demolition had all but pulverized it. The same day that the city was captured the Navy announced that the gulf had been cleared of mines.

3

But there was still Jap extermination to be done on the island.

"On the 10th of May," relates Admiral Struble, "we landed the 108th RCT at Macajalar Bay in northern Mindanao. The purpose of the landing was to join up with the forces that had landed several weeks earlier in the Parang area but who were not making too rapid progress northward because of the rain and the bad roads. Our landing was not opposed, although the Japs had been in the area previously for a long time, and by that afternoon the Army had gotten to the top of the ridge at the head of the bay.

"After the Macajalar Bay landing I was ordered to relieve Admiral Noble of all responsibility for amphibious work in Mindanao. The mine-sweeping of Davao Gulf was completed, and so was a certain amount in Sarangani Bay on the south coast below Davao Gulf. We made a number of minor landings and reconnaissances in the Davao Gulf area to clear out a few knots of Japanese, particularly Navy, that were on the east coast of the gulf.

"The 24th Division was in Davao and, having cleaned up the area fairly well by early July, wished to complete the mop-up of the southeastern part of Mindanao by making a landing at Sarangani Bay. This we did on July 12. The landing at Sarangani Bay was not opposed.

"It is interesting that in the original plans for the invasion of the Philippines, the first landing was to have been in Sarangani Bay. Had the

decision not been made to go into Leyte Gulf direct, the landing there would probably have been made in October, 1944. As it was, Sarangani was the last landing in the Philippines."

The Admiral sums up the enemy as a soldier and fighter in the Philippine campaign as "capable" and even, on occasion, clever.

"But," says Struble, "he was slow to react to attacks on our part, which often gave us an opportunity to move sooner and faster than we otherwise might have been able to do. I think that the manner in which the Philippines campaign was conducted had much to do with our success. The campaign was conducted with lots of speed. I think our people were always ahead of the Japs in their thinking and I believe that larger losses were prevented because we kept moving rapidly."

4

With Mindanao what might be called the formal Philippines campaign was over. But in many of its aspects, there in the south, it was a most informal war, as the saga of the Mighty 10 serves to illustrate.

The Mighty 10—LCS 10 to sundowners—had an unhappy skipper on February 1, 1945.

That day he was cruising aimlessly around Leyte Gulf, dodging ships at anchor and scurrying out of the paths of ships underway. Lieutenant Albert C. Eldridge was irked. So was his pal, Lieutenant Donovan R. Ellis, Jr., captain of the LCS 9, who on this fine day also was playing tag in the crowded harbor.

For they had no orders, except repeated advice delivered with lots of adjectives by skippers of larger craft to keep out of their way. Eldridge and Ellis were ready, willing and, yes, able, to help win the war in the Philippines, and here it was being won without them because the United States Navy seemed to have forgotten their existence.

The homely little craft started to make another turn around the harbor when suddenly the voice radio gobbled: "Brown Jug Nine and Dungeon Zero report to Freeplay for orders!"

"That's us!" Eldridge exclaimed, instantly translating (as he had many times in his dreams) the coded message for LCS 9 and 10 to report to WASATCH, Admiral Kinkaid's flagship.

So they had been found, and a job for them to do too. What would it be? Delivering mail to the larger ships, probably.

The two boats scurried to the flagship and, as senior officer, Eldridge went aboard to get the word. He was met by Captain Richard H. Cruzen, staff operations officer.

"Eldridge, I have a job for you," began Cruzen. With the LCS 9 and LCIs 361 (Lieutenant (jg) Albert J. Hawkes) and 363 (Lieutenant (jg) Ralph H. Kemmerer) you will form into Task Group 70.4 for the purpose of supplying guerrilla forces throughout the Philippines. You are taking over the job previously assigned to Seventh Fleet's submarines."

"Those are the swellest orders we've had since we left the States," replied the elated Eldridge, already thinking of the adventure in such an undertaking. "When do we start, sir?"

"As soon as you are ready," was the reply.

And so began one of the most colorful adventures ever to befall a college instructor. Eldridge, now back teaching at the University of Indiana, tells his own story:

"February 1, 1945, we received those orders, and February 4 we saw our first guerrilla officers at Camiguin Island, just off Mindanao's northern coast. We were on our first mission.

"It was shortly after dawn when we stood off the pier at Mambajao, the main trading post on the island. Through the glasses we could see a brown-skinned crowd streaming down to greet us. We hoped none of them were Japs. Time would tell. The LCIs carrying cargo, went in first. As they approached not a sound could be heard. No sounds from the ship or the shore. The first LCI slid silently toward the piles, then reversed her screws to nestle alongside the pier.

"'Over two!' came the command from the conn.

"'Over two!' from the deck.

"The 'monkey fist' carrying the heaving line arched gracefully through the air toward the quiet curious group ashore. The awaited signal seemed to occur when the line was about in mid-passage. A low murmur went through the crowd; ragged, motley, thin, tense people. One woman started to clap rhythmically. Then a shout . . . a cheer . . . the whole pier came alive with joyful yells and cries and whistles. After three years of waiting, the 'Americanos' had returned.

"Filipinos, whose relatives and neighbors had been killed, whose towns had been burned, looked to the returning Americanos for strength and for food.

"With great pride they took us around what remained of their little town showing us the large church, giving us drinks of their spring water which they claimed to be the best in the islands. They also gave us other drinks, but all hands soon learned to steer a wide course when the main beverage was offered. This stuff, called tuba, looked much like tomato juice, tasted awful, and had very disagreeable aftereffects.

"All day men from Task Group 70.4 were the honored guests of Camiguin Island. Dinners and dances were held. We sang 'God Bless the Philippines' and 'God Bless America' intermittently, each to the same tune and each with the same emotional gusto.

"Unfortunately we had to depart that night for Iligan Bay only a short distance southward where we would unload more supplies. But we were met the following dawn at Iligan pier with even fonder greetings, if this was possible. A Filipino band was on hand and struck up 'Anchors Aweigh' as we tied up. What a strange feeling it was to hear a Filipino band play the Navy song way down there in the enemy-held tropics, 10,000 miles from home. It brought a little lump in my throat.

"None other than the governor of Lanao Province and the Director of the Filipino Boy Scouts for Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago came aboard to welcome us. They had walked 30 miles to extend their greeting.

"There were Moros present trading for knives and other presents. A conference was held with Colonel Wendell W. Fertig, head of the guerrilla forces on Mindanao. Then dances, dinners, and all sorts of festivities followed.

"While we were awaiting darkness and the return run to Leyte Gulf I talked with Commander Charles ("Chico") Parsons, who had directed the previous work by submarines and was starting us off on the right foot by giving us advice. Parsons had a background as large as all outdoors in Filipino affairs, and exploits as long as your arm in spying against the Japs in Manila.

"'Imagine there're quite a few Nips round here, Commander.' I was trying to get a lead on where we might get in some shooting.

"'Helluva lot of 'em right close,' says Parsons.

"'Saaay . . . That so? How near?'

"'Right over there,' replied Parsons, pointing just across the strait.

"'Hmmm. Doesn't look to be more than 20 miles. Wonder how much hot water we'd get into, going over to say hello.'

"Can't say. The Nips are pretty thick over there and they are building barges in Talisayan."

"No, that's not the kind of hot water I mean. Hot water back in Leyte. You see, we have no orders to go running here and there shooting people up. And someone back in Leyte might not like my straying from the path on the first run."

"You're right. Some few can cause a lot of trouble. But there's some mighty good huntin' over there." Parsons pointed once again to the spot where the Japs were supposed to be heavily concentrated.

"Think we could get at them?"

"They're right on the coast."

"Mmmmm. Like to take a trip, Commander? Let's glance at the chart and see what kind of water there is down there."

This was the beginning of Eldridge's buccaneer war against the Japanese. On the first bombardment the two LCSs knocked out a dump of barreled oil and gasoline, and burned up the Japanese barracks, the powerful little gunboats coming within 50 yards of shore looking for barges.

This first and wholly unauthorized bombardment was credited enthusiastically, if somewhat optimistically, in Filipino reports as having killed 600 Japanese and completely destroyed the enemy's store of supplies.

"It wasn't that good by any means," says Eldridge, "but it did prompt Admiral Kinkaid to congratulate us and offer us a free hand in making our future runs."

"The only requirement I made," said Captain Cruzen later, "was that Eldridge send us a position report every day in order that we might know which group of Japs he was chasing."

This Lilliputian 4-ship task force soon became known to the Japanese as the "Devils of the Philippines." Actually the little 14-knot ships, less than 160 feet long, had very little armament. The LCIs' main purpose was transporting troops and supplies, and at first carried only a few 20mm machine guns. The "S's," having additionally a few 40's, rocket launchers and a mortar, and looking something like a Fourth of July fireworks when all weapons were blazing, were designed for close support. Their firepower caused exaggerated estimates of their size and armament to circulate in Japanese circles and even the Filipinos got big-eyed the first time they glimpsed the rugged little gunboats.

One day while the 9 and 10 pounded Cabadbaran and Nasipit in northern Mindanao, Filipino observers who previously had not seen Brown Jug Nine and Dungeon Zero radioed:

"TWO AMERICAN LIGHT CRUISERS SHELLED CABADBARAN FOR FIVE MINUTES AT 14:30 X THENCE NASIPIT SHELLED FOR ONE HOUR BY SAID TWO CRUISERS PLUS ANOTHER SAME TYPE SHELLS COMING FROM DIWATA POINT X UP TO 19:10 NASIPIT STILL BURNING X INFORMATION CONFIRMED."

Eldridge steamed from one strong enemy holdout to another playing his own game of "slap the Jap," firing oil supplies, barges, supply dumps, powerhouses—sometimes from ranges as close as 50 to 100 yards.

"One day we held reveille for the Japs in San Carlos, Island of Negros," recalled Eldridge. "We tried out our new toy, a new 80mm trench mortar mounted on our bow. We plopped some white phosphorus into the Sugar Central ruins and it really brought the Nips out of their headquarters on the double. They thought it was gas. And once more they ran for the 'wild green yonder.'"

Sometimes the two LCIs that usually accompanied the LCSs served as troop transports, carrying Filipino guerrillas to the next invasion point. Otherwise they served as freighters, usually carrying rice as the main cargo, for the guerrillas' greatest shortage was in food. Weapons they took from the enemy.

"Our landings were models of military procedure, form and perfection," says Eldridge. "To prove this point I offer one of my operation orders."

OPERATION HOGAN'S GOAT

NASIPIT, MINDANAO

18 April 1945

Purpose of operation is to take and hold Nasipit area and airfield south of it as a prelude to capture of Buenavista. Approximately 350 Nips in area. From past experience, we can hope Japs will hit the road, and we will hit the road right after them—or at the same time [with our new toy of course]. If they stay and fight, LCIs will remain offshore longer than now anticipated while gunboats clear beach area. In event of enemy fire during rocket bombardment, the Nine will turn to the East and the Ten to the West. [That is, of course, if the fire is of such intensity as to force withdrawal from rocket range.]

Elastic schedule follows:

Underway to Nasipit	0330
Rocket bombardment of Nasipit	0530
Grand entry into harbor and close bombardment of beach areas	0615
Landing of shock troops 110th D.S.T. in the rear. Don't shoot the wrong troops	0645
Landing beaches—Punta and Talisay.	

Truly yours,

/s/ Albert C. Eldridge

Commodore (!)

USNIP

USNIP was Eldridge's own designation for Task Group 70.4, and not a self-deprecatory one, despite the pun it achieved. "United States Navy in (the) Philippines" was what the initials stood for, and to the Filipinos and the Japanese in Mindanao, at least, it was no exaggeration.

Eldridge's little fleet did more than carry weapons and supplies. In one case it even captured an island.

"Before dawn, March 29, 1945, the Nine as lead ship (her skipper, Lieutenant Ellis, had won the toss for the position farthest inside the bay) nosed through the narrow entrance into Masbate City's harbor. The Ten's bow was about 100 yards behind the Nine's stern. Two bright red tracers split the distance between the ships when the Jap guard on shore realized that he had strange visitors.

"Inside the harbor we took position before the town proper and blasted targets on schedule. The LCIs used mortars for the first time. They filled the bay with a pretty spray—a little scary at times, though. The Nine's 40mm did a precise decapitation of the machine-gun pits on the military crest of the hill overlooking the harbor. Up to the pier went the 363. Over the side went a sailor who tottered on the crumbled concrete blown out of shape by air raids of a long previous date. Lines secured. Guerrillas ashore. In 30 minutes the town our Army intelligence deemed too dangerous for a direct sea approach into the harbor fell to 75 guerrillas after stalwart resistance by one Nip on the run."

A few days later Army representatives went over to Captain Cruzen and requested several LSTs and LCIs for the purpose of seizing Masbate.

"That won't be necessary," said Cruzen. "Eldridge's force has already captured the island."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Borneo

I

WHILE organized resistance was nearing an end in the Philippines, elements of General MacArthur's military and naval forces turned to the southwest once more to fight a phase of the war few persons, except those who were engaged in it, remember.

From May 1 to the end of June the Americans joined the Australian and Netherlands forces in the recapture of Borneo, a land of romantic significance in the United States since Phineas T. Barnum made it a household name by including a forlorn native in his circus sideshow, dubbed as the original wild man. That it is the world's third largest island and had the world's richest petroleum deposits were items in a quiz program. To the average American, including the soldiers and sailors assigned to its reconquest, Borneo was the home of wild men and of Sir Charles Vyner Brooke, ruler of Sarawak and the only white raja in the increasingly prosaic world.

But for all the time young men from Brooklyn, Baltimore, and Butte fought for Borneo the headlines in the world's press were devoted to the battle news from Okinawa and the collapse of Germany. If Borneo rated front-page space, it was a stickful of type to pad out a short column.

If it hadn't been for its abundance of oil and rubber, the pear-shaped island lying athwart the equator at the southern end of the China Sea would not have merited General MacArthur's personal attention. Although Borneo is a Dutch possession save for the British sovereignty over its northwestern coast, its petroleum and rubber make the island rank high in international economy and the certain Japanese sabotage of groves and wells would be a serious loss to every industrial nation.

Oil and rubber, although quite enough in themselves to warrant Borneo's capture, are only the readily accessible resources. Many other valuables are hidden back in the dense jungles: diamonds, semiprecious stones, teak, camphor, sandalwood, and other rare cabinet woods. But

not even in New Guinea has nature better defended such treasures with all but impenetrable jungles, precipitous ravines, rivers, heat, pestilent insects, and a nightmare zoo of flying serpents—even flying frogs—pythons, giant apes, rhinoceroses, and blood-sucking land leeches.

And, to top it off for the excursionists of 1945, lethal Japanese.

2

The plans for Borneo drawn up in General MacArthur's Manila headquarters included three main landings: at Tarakan, oil-rich island of about 160 square miles close to Borneo's northeastern tip; Brunei Bay, to the northwest; Balikpapan, to the southeast—in that order.

Senior naval commander for the first assault to Tarakan was Vice Admiral Barbey. He brought with him Rear Admirals Berkey and Royal, the former to furnish cruiser close cover and the latter to command the Tarakan Attack Group.

For the Navy, in each instance, the biggest job was minesweeping—clearing the accumulation sown offensively by the Dutch Navy, the Americans, Australians, and British, besides the defending Japanese.

Added to gunfire from the beaches, the minesweepers' job was complicated by strong currents, shallow depths, high tides, poor (where any) navigational markings, and a very limited time schedule. It was a dirty, difficult assignment.

With more luck than was expected, the only ship to be damaged prior to the Tarakan landing was the destroyer JENKINS while in support of the minesweepers. She hit a mine in an area that had previously been swept.

In spite of heavy currents and an extreme tidal range, the 26th Australian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier Whitehead, AIF) reinforced waded ashore at Tarakan from their mud-clutched landing vessels on schedule—15 minutes past 8:00 A.M., May 1, 1945—without enemy opposition.

The Japanese remained hidden until May 2, the day after the landing. Perhaps they thought that life on the rain-soaked, steaming, vermin-ridden island was worse than being shot at, for the invading forces—as it was. But when five sweeps moved into the narrow shallow channel north of Tarakan the Japanese stoicism snapped. At least six previously undetected shore batteries cut loose against the ships. YMS 481 took seven

direct hits, blew up and sank, and YMSs 334 and 364 also were holed in the brief barrage. But forthwith the fire was returned by the destroyer-transport COFER and two heavily gunned LCSs, which silenced the Japanese positions before they could reload.

By May 6 the Tarakan airstrip had been secured and by the end of the month the oilfields, though heavily damaged, were back in Allied hands.

Six weeks later, June 10, 1945, the amphibious forces, under the Berkey-Royal combine, moved into Brunei Bay on the northwest coast, where the Japanese admirals had once stopped to map final plans for the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Primarily used by the Japanese as port for rubber and oil, Brunei Bay had value also as a naval and air base bracketing the China Sea with Singapore, only 800 miles to the southwest and Indo-China 600 miles westward. It had been suggested that the British Pacific Fleet use Brunei as a base while supporting planned operations against Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies.

There had been some talk of sending the British Pacific Fleet to support the Brunei Bay operation because it was in British territory. Admiral Nimitz opposed it. He passed on to Admiral King and the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington the recommendation of Admiral Kinkaid that the British Fleet was not needed at Brunei Bay, since only one Japanese cruiser, HAGURO, remained afloat in the South China Sea. Besides, all agreed, there was more serious business to occupy the British warships closer to Japan.

On the day before the landing it was learned that the Japanese heavy cruiser ASHIGARA had been caught and disposed of by the British submarine TRENCHANT, almost certainly removing the possibility of a surprise sortie by enemy fleet units. Nevertheless, four cruisers, under Rear Admiral Riggs, were placed about 150 miles to the southwest between Brunei Bay and Singapore, as precautionary measure.

"We thought a surface attack was extremely remote," said Riggs later, "but Admiral Berkey didn't need us for fire support."

No sooner had the Australian-American Brunei Attack Group's hundred ships steamed into the bay than they were greeted by a Japanese air attack. One lone bomber, a twin-engined Nick came roaring in at about 500 feet, hastily and harmlessly dropped a bomb in the water and sped away, shell bursts snapping at its tail. It was in almost pitiable contrast to the enemy aerial reception accorded the Allied fleet at Leyte.

After a flurry of shelling by cruisers, destroyers,¹ and landing craft, which had been spread thin along the rugged coast line, Australian Major General G. F. Wooten's landing teams, the 20th and 24th Australian Brigade Corps, splashed ashore against a familiar scene, a retreating enemy. These were units of the famed 9th Australian Division, who had won the sobriquet "Rats of Tobruk" in Africa at the beginning of the war.

The "Rats" made simultaneous landings at three points along 20 miles of coast line; on the southeast coast of Labuan Island, the west coast of Brunei Bay at Brooketon, and the eastern tip of Muara Island. Enemy opposition was so light in all the landing areas that within two hours the beachheads were secure. Berkeley's fire support ships had been used sparingly, but as Captain Atherton Macondray, skipper of the supporting cruiser NASHVILLE, pointed out, "there was always the possibility that the Japanese would try another banzai." But the worst the Japanese could do that night was to send a raiding party against troops at the naval base, killing several men.

About two hours after the landings General MacArthur went ashore accompanied by Lieutenant General Sir Leslie Morshead, commander of the I Australian Corps, Admiral Royal, Air Vice Marshal Bostock, and General Kenney. They found Victoria Town on Labuan deserted and almost completely destroyed, and the palace once occupied by the great white raja, Brooke, completely devastated. After examining the hits made by the naval bombardment, MacArthur observed that the barrage was "flawless" and had been laid down "with mathematical precision." He was so well pleased with the accuracy of the Navy gunners that he dispatched a message to all hands expressing "the pride and gratification I feel in such a splendid performance."

Brunei cost few Navy casualties: the worst mishap was the loss on June 8 of the minesweeper SALUTE, which struck a mine, killing 9 men and wounding 37. One over-eager Air Force bomber from the Philippines made a drop near some swimmers from an underwater demolition team, causing one death and injuries to the others.

After having directed the amphibious operation, Admiral Royal, satisfied that all was secure, pulled out of Brunei Bay about 6:00 P.M., June 17, aboard his flagship ROCKY MOUNT. He was going back to Subic

¹ The fire support ships were divided into three sectors: The cruisers BOISE, HMAS HOBART, and PHOENIX; the destroyers KILLEN and A. W. GRANT were stationed off Labuan; the cruiser NASHVILLE, HMAS ARUNTA and CONNOR off Muara, and the destroyers CHARRETTE, BELL, and BURNS off Brunei Bluff.

Bay "for a little rest." Next day Admiral Royal suddenly collapsed from an overworked heart and was dead, as much a battle casualty as if he had been struck by a sniper's bullet.

3

The third large amphibious assault on oil-rich Borneo, Balikpapan, was actually underway before Admiral Royal had departed Brunei Bay. The minesweepers started to work fifteen days ahead of the landing. Hindsight indicates that it would have been better could they have started sooner.

Since Balikpapan lay deep in Japanese-held territory, considerable opposition was anticipated from enemy aircraft, with attacks by suicide boats and submarines augmenting the shore batteries. Land-based air fighter cover was unavoidably uncertain. The Army Air Force's nearest all-weather fields, at Morotai, were out of range and closer fields were rained in. As MacArthur put it in his request to Nimitz for escort carriers: "The adverse weather and the difficult terrain conditions have prevented preparation of a fighter strip on Tarakan. Long-range fighter cover from Tawi Tawi uncertain because of weather."

So an all-weather CVE task unit composed of SUWANEE, GILBERT ISLANDS, and BLOCK ISLAND under Rear Admiral William D. Sample was ordered in to fly fighter cover during the critical days and to furnish tactical support for the troops ashore.

Balikpapan presented the most difficult gunnery problem of any campaign in the Southwest Pacific Area. Shallow water prevented the fire support ships from closing the beach sufficiently adequately to protect the YMSs while they swept the deep-water channels. Initially, the Cruiser Covering Force consisted of MONTPELIER and DENVER, screened by four destroyers. This wasn't enough. The Australian cruisers SHROPSHIRE and HOBART along with PHOENIX and NASHVILLE, who had come along to augment the escort carrier group, were called into action.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington also decided to include the Dutch cruiser TROMP, veteran of the 1942 Java Sea campaign,¹ particularly to show the population around Balikpapan that the Netherlands Navy was still fighting.

On June 7 TROMP reported for duty at Balikpapan, bringing the

¹ The Editor of the BATTLE REPORT series has the happy duty to apologize for "sinking" the TROMP on page 217, Volume I. W. K.

light cruiser and her skipper, Captain Fredrik Stam, to a storybook ending.

Let Captain—now Rear Admiral—Stam report the battle, and, for him, its almost Hollywood sequel.

4

"I was on shore duty in Batavia, Java, at the outbreak of hostilities, serving on Admiral C. E. L. Helfrich's staff. We were under the over-all command of General Wavell, known as ADBACOM.¹ I had with me my wife and two children, a boy 12 and a girl 10. Life had been very pleasant until December 7, 1941, when things began to happen. Following the Battle of the Java Sea I was transferred to Admiral Hart's staff and then back again to Admiral Helfrich's staff when he became ABDAFLOAT.

"It soon became necessary for Admiral Helfrich to move his headquarters to Ceylon. He took with him a small staff. I was one of ten officers that went along, leaving behind, of necessity, my family without knowing if I would ever see them again.

"I served as Chief of Materiel for the Dutch Navy in that part of the world until I was ordered to command the light cruiser *TROMP*, the only Dutch cruiser afloat following the invasion of Holland, the Netherlands East Indies, and, of course, the fateful Battle of the Java Sea.

"It was an honor to be ordered to a ship with such a record of battle. She is not such a large ship as cruisers go. She carried six 6-inch guns, four 3-inch guns, eight 40mm and eight 20mm, six torpedo tubes and a battery of depth charges.

"She had seen much of the war, the unknown part of the war, escorting convoys to Singapore while under air attack, fighting a night surface action at Badoeng Strait during the invasion of Bali, where she took eleven hits (6- and 8-inch shells) from Japanese cruisers. She was reported lost after this action because she headed for Soerabaja just as the port was under repeated heavy air attacks. Instead, *TROMP* changed course to Sydney and laid up for repairs. She later became known as Admiral Christie's "striking force" against Japanese armed merchantmen coming through the Straits of Soenda into the Indian Ocean to raid Allied sea routes between Australia and India.

"After taking command in October, 1943, during *TROMP*'s yearly

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume I, Chapter 10.

overhaul at Melbourne we were ordered to join the British Eastern Fleet, which now felt strong enough to come back to Ceylon from Africa, where it based after the Easter raids of 1942 on Trincomalee and Colombo. We served with them about a year, participating in strikes against Sumatra and Java. As we bombed Java, I thought constantly of my family imprisoned there and hoped they were alive. There was no way to find out.

"When the Americans started attacking the NEI from the north in May, 1945, TROMP was ordered once again to join them. We circled south around Java and New Guinea and went to Manus, then Morotai, and finally arrived at Balikpapan.

"We had two British code men aboard, and at Manus we picked up two American officers for code and cipher work. In our code room we thus had two Dutch, two British, and two Americans. We called it 'The Foreign Office.'

"At Balikpapan we bombarded for seventeen days with six light cruisers. There were also raids by your Flying Fortresses. During this period I saw one of the things that amazed me most during the war—the American Underwater Demolition Teams. They swam in during broad daylight, at nine o'clock in the morning, under the protection of American destroyers and the TROMP, and within 30 yards of shore they blew up Japanese obstacles. For three days at three different places they did this, and didn't suffer a single casualty. The Japanese had stuck trunks of palm trees in the water and strung wire with mines attached between them. The demolition teams cut gaps through this and returned from the beach unharmed.

"The minesweepers also did excellent work.

"It was one of the most difficult minesweeping jobs in history. Before the war it had been mined by the Dutch Navy. During the war it was mined by the Japanese and at the same time by the Americans, Australians, and British from the air. The Allied mining was so effective that the enemy had been able to use the port very little, and during the last part of the war practically not at all. Some of the mines were set at seven clicks—that is, they had to be activated seven times before they would go off. It was difficult for the YMSs but they did very well, although they suffered heavy losses.

"The TROMP, because of her shallow draft, went in with three or four American destroyers to give close support to the minesweepers. Every now

and then the Japanese would roll a gun from a tunnel, fire a few rounds, and roll it back in when we opened fire at them.

"Another thing amazed me. Before the operation I got a stack of papers about five inches thick. It's easy for staff officers to write up plans but whether or not they can be executed is another question. The plans called for a D-day of July 1 and an H-hour of 0900. The troops landed 0858. But Admiral Noble, the amphibious commander, was unhappy. It was two minutes ahead of time! The planning was so thorough that during the first 24 hours there was not a single casualty ashore. This showed the effectiveness of staff work in the American Navy. We watched General MacArthur wade ashore approximately three hours after the initial landing.

"By H-hour we had expended a great deal of our ammunition. We couldn't replenish, for we had no supply ship. Morale was pretty good but we couldn't get any news from our friends or relatives. Mail came for the Americans; mail for the British and the Australians, but not one letter came to the TROMP.

"We had to go back to Australia for ammunition which had been custom built in the United States. We might as well have been shooting bricks of gold!

Meanwhile peace broke out. There was only one thing all of us wanted to do, go back to Java. Many of our families had been left there and none of us had received a single letter, not even from the Red Cross. I hadn't heard from my wife and children for three and a half years, not since I left Batavia, March 3, 1942.

"The TROMP was the first ship back in Batavia along with the British cruiser SHEFFIELD. On our way he had asked American supply officers for as much foodstuffs as possible. I'll bet we had about five million vitamin tablets aboard that ship. From the food, all of it given us by the American Navy, we made food parcels, one for each of our 400 men.

"After docking I went straight to the Repatriation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI) headquarters. They had been parachuted in earlier.

"Do you know anything about my wife?" I asked.

"What did you say?"

"Do you know anything about my wife?"

"He told me to turn around, and there she stood with my daughter! It was a happy day. My son joined us that afternoon. He had been put in

a separate camp after he reached the age of 13. My children, my girl now 13, and my boy 15, had not grown an inch in three years and they were about 10 or 12 pounds lighter.

"In the concentration camps the Japanese had allocated about 120 Europeans into a single native house that had been built to accommodate four or five people. Sometimes half a dozen people slept in the lavatory at the same time it was being used by the 120. As some people got a glimpse of the camps they turned away, they couldn't stand to look. The people that had survived, and about 40 per cent hadn't, survived on spirit and practically nothing else. When people gave up hope, they usually died within 24 hours. The children, of course, had never seen anything else and thought it natural. I have never seen a group so emaciated.

"It had been a long, hard struggle for the TROMP, her crew and their families, but many were now reunited and could start living once more."

5

When Captain Stam stated the minesweepers had a tough assignment, he just about summarized the story of Balikpapan.

The minesweeper epic began June 15 when 16 YMSs, supported by the willing but not-too-strongly-gunned destroyer transport COFER and accompanied by several LCVPs, entered the approaches to Balikpapan. It was three days before anything happened, but it was three days before the minesweeps entered the dangerous area referred to in the operation order as area Phillis.

Unfortunately from a psychological point of view, the first minesweep to enter Phillis, YMS 50, ran into serious trouble. She hit a magnetic mine causing an explosion. "And what an explosion," exclaimed Lieutenant (jg) Blake G. Stern, YMS 50's young skipper.

"We had just completed one run and were heading out of the area when the explosion knocked most of us unconscious. When I recovered I was lying on the deck below the flying bridge, which was a shambles. The mast had been snapped forward and had fallen over the flying bridge; the generators were stopped, the main engines were knocked out, and the only part of the ship that seemed operative was the radio. I could hear it squawking, but having no aerial we couldn't send a message.

"Meanwhile the Jap shore batteries had really opened up and were getting close. Splashes bracketed the ship. We were slowly sinking, the

3-inch gun crew had been knocked out, and I thought it best to abandon ship.

"It was high time that we did get off, for the Japanese were now on target. At about this time our colored cook ran below decks, thinking he had time to recover a few dollars which he had acquired during a much less exciting contest. As he knelt over his bunk to uncover his cache two shells tore through the wooden hull, barely missing his scalp.

" 'Ah nevah wanted thet money nohow,' yelled the cook as he dived over the side."

But the Japanese were not limiting their fire to the sinking YMS 50. They were also blazing away, with a little less accuracy, at the other sweepers nearby; sufficiently accurate, however, to cause the other sweepers to jettison their almost irreplaceable gear and turn to seaward.

"You couldn't blame them," said Admiral Riggs in his report of the action. "It was the natural thing to do. As soon as the little sweeps were able to clear a channel 50 yards wide, I ordered destroyers and the TROMP in to about 3 miles offshore.

" 'Is the area clear of mines?' radioed Captain Stam from the TROMP as his shallow-draft cruiser stood in toward the shore line. The other cruisers had to remain outside the 10-fathom curve, about 7 miles from the shore.

" 'We hope so,' I answered, 'but the minesweepers must have support now.' "

Captain Stam hastened to assure the Admiral that he was anxious to support the minesweepers. He merely wanted to know what kind of trouble he would encounter.

Conditions improved some for the YMSs, but a better offense was strongly indicated. Daily strikes were made by high-level B-24s, low-level B-25s, and the strafing fighters but with little success against Japanese shore batteries. The cave-minded gunners simply retired until the planes had finished, and emerged unharmed and refreshed, ready to start shooting all over again.

Their marksmanship improved with experience. On June 21, YMS 335 was hit by an enemy shell which exploded her ready ammunition box. June 22, YMS 10 caught some more enemy shells. June 23, YMS 364 was hit.

But the sweeping continued. Gun crews crawled to their stations like fast-moving ants, using the spray shields on their gun mounts for protec-

tion, and the little ships combined shore bombardment with the task of clearing a path for the invasion forces.

Mines were the YMS killers. Following the 50, the 368, 39, and 365 were victims of underwater explosives. Lieutenant (jg) D. C. Cushman, executive officer of the 365, describes the sinking:

"I was walking from the wardroom to the flying bridge when the deafening explosion rattled me around in the passageway like dice in a cup. The next thing I recall was hearing someone say that the skipper had been trapped by the fallen mast. After much tugging from all available hands, we freed the skipper's legs just as the ship capsized and rolled from underneath our feet, rocking the damaged YMS 364 which had moved dangerously close to rescue survivors.

"With all hands safely aboard YMS 364 we began to move away, and another YMS was ordered in to sink what was left of our wreckage. Suddenly one of our men let out a yell. Our mascot fox terrier 'Doc' had just climbed out of the wreckage, was whining and barking, prancing and wagging his tail, on what was left of the bow. Doc was named after a bartender in Galveston, Texas, who had given us the dog in the summer of '44. Each morning since, the little dog had scampered around to each man on the ship to greet him with face-licking and a general display of dog affection. He had helped keep our spirits high.

"While the 364 lay off, one of our Chief Motor Machinists dove into the water, swam to the wreckage and threw Doc in the water. The little dog swam like a shot to us. We picked both Doc and the Chief up and then made all possible speed out of there."

Mines and Japanese gunners ran up a big box score against the YMSs: 5 sunk, 12 damaged.

The fire support ships alone poured nearly 1,000 8-inch, 12,000 6-inch, 19,000 5-inch, and 60 British 4.7 projectiles into the Balikpapan area, surpassing even the steel hurled at Leyte and Lingayen Gulf, before the entrance was forced.

"On July 4 all the ships fired a 21-gun salute at inland targets which had been pointed out by aircraft," Captain Macondray relates. "The NASHVILLE's gunners were lucky—we blew up a major ammunition dump during the celebration.

"We went ashore that day," continued the cruiser skipper, "and found Balikpapan a deserted city. The only thing we found of interest was a warehouse full of new blue bicycles. Since the natives didn't want

them, we found plenty of sailors who did and several of the ships departed with a good chunk of the Japanese transportation system."

6

The last Japanese air attack in the Southwest Pacific came on June 25 when half a dozen torpedo planes made orthodox—that is, not suicide—runs on the ships operating around Balikpapan. Three Bettys lost; no damage to the Americans. At least, some of the YMSs were avenged.

Balikpapan wound up the show in Borneo and, generally, the war in the Southwest Pacific. Mopping-up operations had to continue, of course. Enemy pockets still remained in the mountains of northern Luzon, in the mountains east of Manila, and in central Mindanao. Even as far in the rear areas as New Guinea, New Britain, and Bougainville, uncounted Japanese were still holed up, strangely at peace and worrying more about vegetable gardens than weapons. Now the Seventh Fleet could steam unmolested from the north tip of Luzon across the equator to Macassar Straits, where so shortly before the Rising Sun had monopolized the seaways.

But the mail from back home was all about Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Nobody had heard of Borneo, and probably would have dismissed it with a "What? No wild women?"

PART TWO

The Islands of Surprise

*To wizard islands of august surprise ;
God make our blunders wise.*

Vachel Lindsay



PLATE XXXIII—*Operation Victor* opened the Allied drive to the southwest Philippines and the Netherlands East Indies. Rear Admiral William N. Fechteler (*above*), commander of Amphibious Group Eight, observes the fleet bombardment of Palawan, fifth largest island of the Philippines, from the bridge of his flagship, February 28, 1945. (*below*) Landing craft churn ashore at Zamboanga, of tailless monkey fame, to begin the reconquest of Mindanao. Marine flyers and elements of the Army's 41st Division made the assault.





PLATE XXXIV—Australians join the battle for Borneo. (*upper*) Australian General George F. Wootten (*left*) confers with Rear Admiral Forrest B. Royal, aboard the latter's flagship *ROCKY MOUNT* before the attack on Brunei Bay, Borneo. General Wootten commanded the 9th Division of the 1st Australian Corps, the celebrated "Rats of Tobruk" in Africa at the beginning of the war. Admiral Royal (who died during the campaign) headed the Taranakan attack group.

(*center*) Fortunately no enemy planes are about as these launches and landing craft, "taxi," stand by the flagship for high-ranking officers who are doing some last-minute planning on the Borneo campaign, May-June 1945.

(*lower*) The day before the Balikpapan landing, Commander J. P. Craff, beachmaster for the operation, is transferred from the flagship *USS WASATCH* to the *PC 610*. Among ships in this action was the Dutch cruiser *TROMP*, earlier reported as lost in the 1942 Java Sea campaign.





PLATE XXXVII—Two remarkable closeups show the destructive power of firebombs dropped by Navy Venturas and Army Lightnings on the Japanese supply base at Miri, west Borneo. (*above*) An enemy ice plant is thoroughly defrosted in a sea of fire. (*below*) Enemy warehouse resembles a toasted marshmallow as it is enveloped in a ball of flame. This joint Army-Navy attack mission operated from distant Philippine bases.





PLATE XXXVIII—(upper) "Thorough coverage." An Australian rifleman and a Coast Guard cameraman await a Japanese soldier hiding in the ruins of a pillbox on the Balikpapan, Borneo, beachhead. Either he will come out with his hands up or not come out at all!

(center) Shoals and offshore reefs forced Australian troops from the LCI 744 to wade through waist-deep water in this sector of the Labuan Island-Brunei Bay operation, Borneo.



(lower) Adventurers all! These are the officers and men of the LCS 10, whose fabulous exploits supplying guerrilla forces on Mindanao read like dime-novel fiction. With the LCS 9, they waged buccaneer war against the Japanese as Task Group 70.4, carrying out such missions as *Operations Hogan's Goat*, and seizing objectives (Masbate) assigned to much heavier forces.

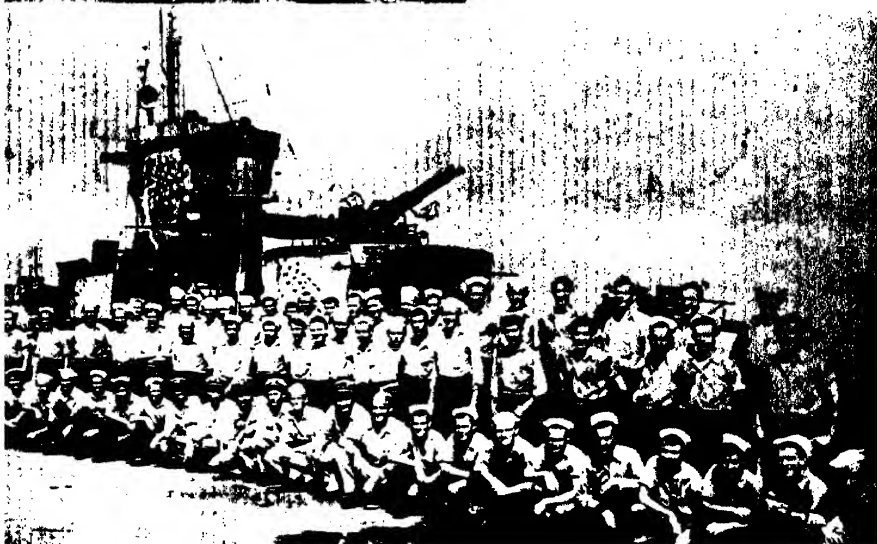


PLATE XXXIX—Far in the interior of China a Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard Task Force set up weather information stations which furnished invaluable assistance to Allied operations—air, sea and undersea—in the Far East. This was later expanded to include intelligence work and the training of Chinese guerrillas for missions against the Japanese. Known as SACO (Sino-American Cooperative Organization) the group was led by Commander M. E. Miles.

(upper) Flags of U.S. and China fly side-by-side as Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek reviews the force at SACO headquarters.

(center) A weather balloon is sent up at Sian, Shensi Province. Weather forecasts were broadcast to all our forces in Asiatic waters.

(lower) Chinese students take notes as instructor Lt. L. A. Schulhof, USCGR, conducts an out of doors class in veterinary medicine at SACO headquarters.



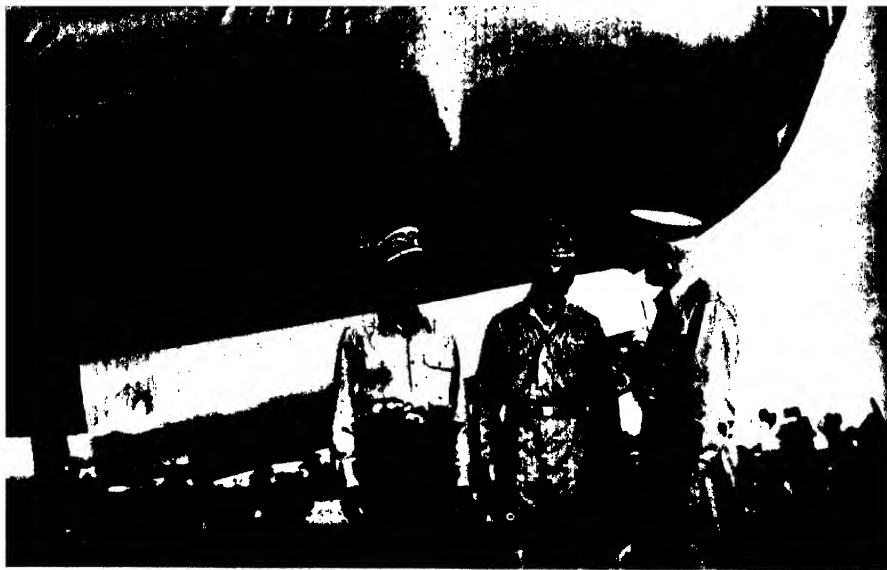


PLATE XL—(above) Pacific unification. Under the nose of a giant B-29, named in his honor, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas (left), chats with the plane's commanding officer, Colonel Boyd Hubbard, Jr., of Colorado Springs (center), and General of the Army Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, during dedication ceremonies, Guam, June 14, 1945. (below) A bomb from a Navy Liberator from the Seventh Fleet hits a Japanese boatyard on Formosa, June 26, 1945.



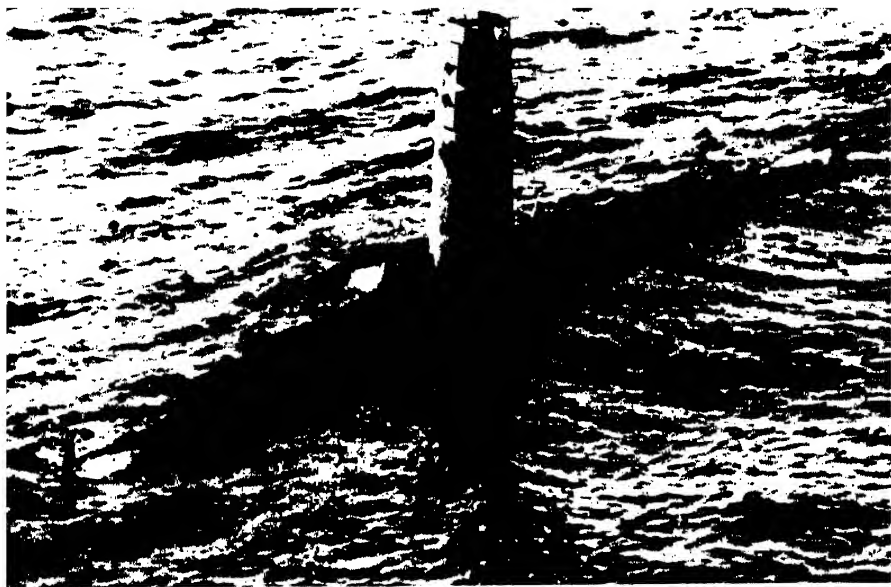


PLATE XLI—(above) Last moments of an Army Air Force B-29, so badly damaged on a Central Pacific mission that it had to be ditched at sea, southwest of Guam. Ten survivors put off in rafts and were picked up by a Navy destroyer escort. (below) In three rafts, the ten survivors of the B-29 crash, lie alongside the rescue ship. This scene was to be repeated many times during the closing stages of the war in the Far East with submarines, seaplanes, and many types of surface ships in rescuing roles.



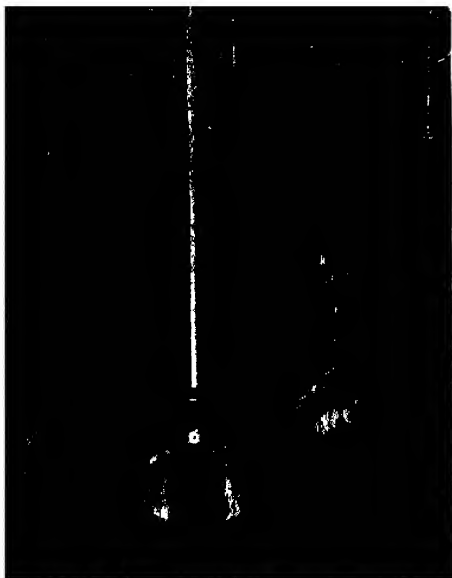


PLATE XLII—A Navy combat artist visits the "End of the Line." The three drawings on this page were made by Lt. Comdr. Griffith Bailly Coale, official Navy combat artist, during a visit to Fremantle, Western Australia. U.S. submarines from this remote base accounted for 1,500,000 tons of Japanese shipping in two years.

(upper) "Up scope," for a quick look. The periscope, eye of the submarine when submerged, rises from its well as the Captain, squatting on the conning tower deck, signals with the palms of his hands.

(center) A small Japanese freighter, not important enough for a torpedo, has brought the submarine up for "battle surface." In less than a minute the deck gun began firing at the surprised enemy ship.

(lower) The submarine tender USS PELIAS, veteran of the Pearl Harbor attack, and her brood of subs in the Swan River, Fremantle.

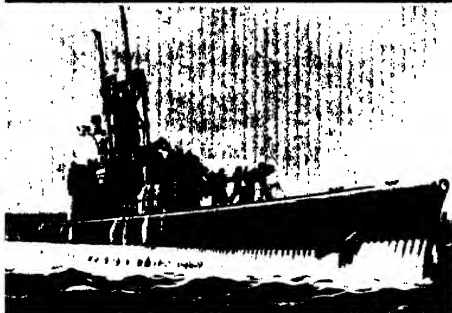
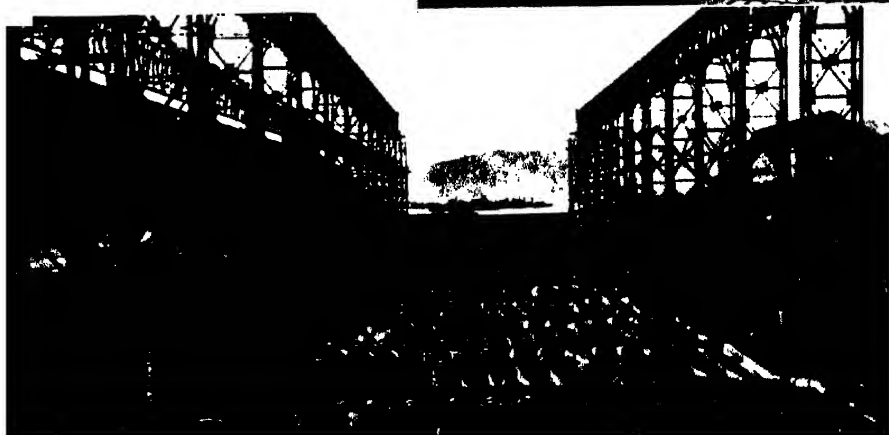
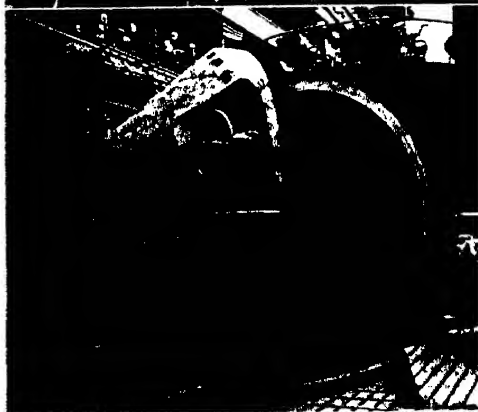


PLATE XLVII—Japan had the largest and smallest submarines, but their combat records cannot compare with those of the Allies, nor even of Germany.

(upper) Two monster Japanese submarines, tied side-by-side to the USS PROTEUS in Tokyo Bay, surrendered to U.S. naval forces at sea, August 27, 1945. Displacing over 4,000 tons, each was equipped with three pontoon planes, fitted into a cylinder-like hangar below the conning tower. The planes were launched by catapult and recovered by a crane. The latter retracted flush with the deck (right).

(center) Closeup of the hangar, its heavy gate swung partially open. It housed "Judy" type Japanese planes, used principally for observation. These subs were nearly 400 feet long, and had a 40-foot beam.

(lower) Brood of unborn midgets. More than 100 five-man underseas craft were in various stages of completion at Kure, when this Japanese naval base was taken over by a U.S. Navy force under Rear Admiral Lawrence F. Reifsnider, Commander, Amphibious Group Four, U.S. Pacific Fleet.





had many facets, not all of them grim. (left) Rising from the depths during a patrol mission the crew of a U.S. Navy submarine were astonished to find they had taken a seal aboard. The sleek and smug-looking "stow-away" obligingly remained on deck long enough for a crew member to produce a camera and record the strange event. Another Navy submarine picked up a piece of one of its own torpedoes that was hurled into the air after exploding against an enemy ship. The torpedo hunk landed on the submerged deck!

(right) To celebrate the sinking of another Japanese ship, the cook of the USS PARCHE whips up a frosted cake that rivals the kind mother used to make. Commander L. P. Ramage received the Congressional Medal of Honor for an outstanding combat record as skipper of the PARCHE.



(left) Act of mercy. While on a war patrol, during which she sank a Japanese destroyer and 4 other ships, the submarine WAHOO came across a harmless fishing boat, becalmed far from land. The three survivors, of a crew of nine, were supplied with food and water. WAHOO later was lost in Japanese waters.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Indispensable Island

I

THIS WAS IWO JIMA, after St. Patrick's Day of 1945. Dark and quiet under a star-scattered sky, the only sound the distant murmur of surf and the sporadic exchange of familiar reminiscence between a group of bored young men sprawled on the cindery sand. "There was a dame in Seattle once . . ."

It was 3:30 A.M. One of the men yawned, took off his long-billed cap, and scratched his head. He looked skyward, to the west. There was nothing but a few blots of clouds and a lot of stars.

He looked to the north. Nothing. Just stars. But wait a minute . . . He looked again. One of the stars seemed to be moving. Behind it a second was following. Then a third . . .

"Here they come!" he shouted to his companions and pointed to the moving lights. "I hope the Imperial bonfires are burning well."

By now a whole string of lights was moving across the sky heading south and the heavy hum of scores of engines saturated the still night air. One of the beads of light dropped out of the string, like a bead falling from a flying necklace.

The men watched the descending light as it circled the island.

"Looks as if he either needs gas or has a shot-up engine," diagnosed one of the men. "Let's get going." The men scrambled into a jeep and headed down toward the end of the runway.

The giant plane settled down toward the runway like a huge steel platform descending from the night sky. Slowly its landing gear came down, like clubfeet searching for a questionable step, groping for the ground.

The engine sounded weak, not quite healthy. One of the four was out. Its feathered prop looked dumb and inert, like a paralyzed limb.

The plane waved groggily as it came in. A crash truck and an ambu-

lance moved slowly across the field. The plane touched the runway, jerked sideways slightly, and then straightened out. Before it rolled to a stop ground crews were steering it into the maintenance area. As the good engines abruptly froze to a halt mechanics started swarming over the wounded giant.

"All right, men, jerk that shot-up engine and get a new one in pronto," ordered a man in greasy khakis.

It was a typical B-29 landing at Iwo, "The Wayside Service Station."

What this little island meant to the men of the 21st Bomber Command who were flying the longest bombing missions of the war—from the Marianas to the Home Islands of Japan and back—can best be understood by quoting the final issue of *Impact*, the official publication devoted to the part played by the Army Air Forces in the war against Japan.

"To every B-29 crew who flew to Japan after March [1945], the fact that Iwo Jima had become a U.S. base was a cause for thanksgiving. Iwo is less than five miles long—a very little island. But never did so little mean as much to so many. Located about midway between Guam and Japan, Iwo broke the long stretch, both going and coming. If you had engine trouble, you held out for Iwo. If you were shot up over Japan and had wounded aboard, you held out for Iwo. If the weather was too rough, you held out for Iwo. Formations assembled over Iwo, and gassed up at Iwo for extra long missions. If you needed fighter escort, it usually came from Iwo. If you had to ditch or bail out, you knew that air-sea rescue units were sent from Iwo. Even if you never used Iwo as an emergency base, it was a psychological benefit. It was there to fall back on."

But things were not like that on Iwo during February . . .

2

Iwo Jima had to be ours. There were no two ways about it.

This grim fact was evident not only to American planners. The Japanese knew of that compulsion and were determined to thwart it. Consequently the defenses of that tiny hunk of volcano top were as strong as any man has yet devised. Its only weakness lay in its isolation, for by this stage of the war the American fleet had complete control of the Pacific Ocean, even to the shores of Japan, as will soon be seen. But this one weakness was fatal. Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi must

FOR B-29's - IWO JIMA

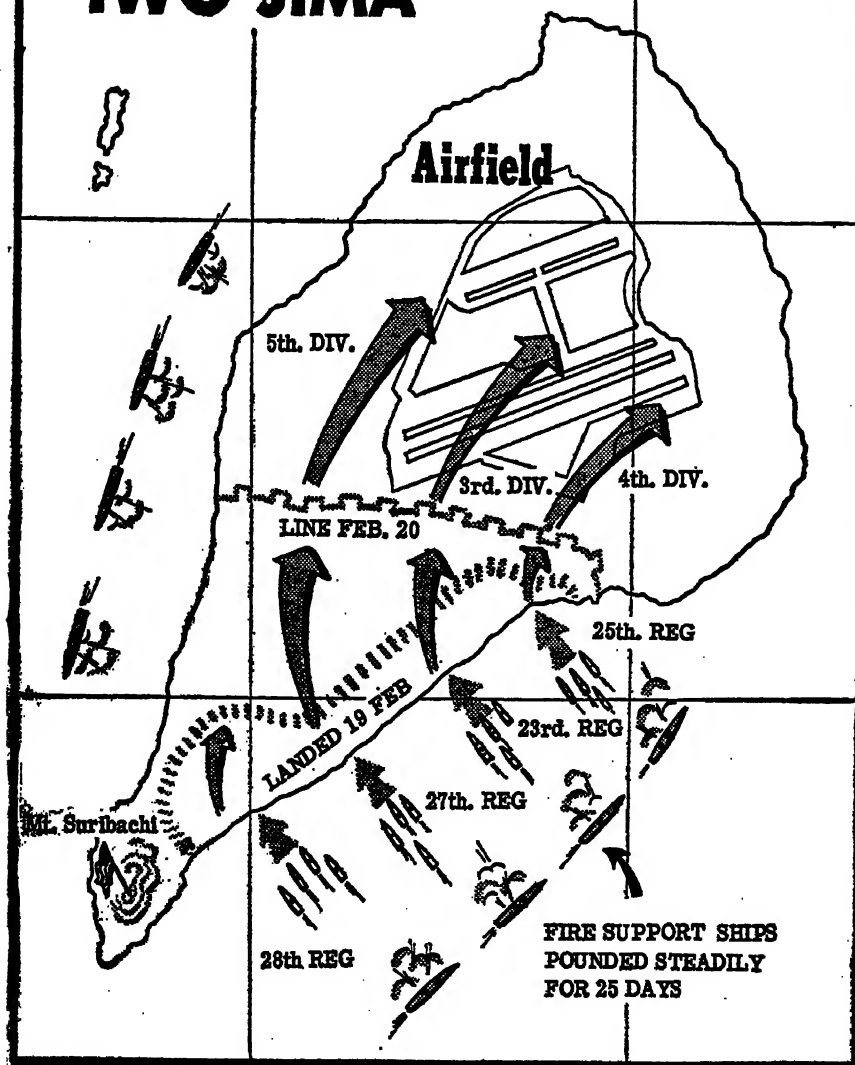


FIGURE 4

have known this from the beginning; nevertheless, with typical Oriental energy and resignation he set about making the volcanic ash heap a labyrinth of cross-supporting, cunningly concealed defenses—hard, tough defenses that would make the Americans pay heavily in flesh and blood for every inch of ground they captured.

Americans had been to Iwo before. Commodore Perry had stopped there in his Asiatic meanderings and had named the island, the largest in the Volcano Group, "Sulphur Island." The indigenous population was a mixture of American, British, Negro, Kanaka and Japanese bloodlines. When the Japanese settled there in 1891, they kept the Perry-given name but, of course, translated it into Japanese—Iwo Jima.

Iwo Jima, appropriately enough, had been one of the practice targets for the 21st Bomber Command after the B-29s had first come to the Marianas during the latter part of October, 1944. By November 24 the airmen were ready for their first strike against the Home Islands and on that date Tokyo was raided for the first time since Major General (then Lieutenant Colonel) Doolittle's carrier-launched strike in 1942.¹ From Isely Field, Saipan, 111 B-29s took off on the 1,500-mile-long "Hirohito Highway" to bomb the Musashino aircraft engine plant. From then on five or six city-flattening raids, directed mostly against the aircraft industry, were thrown against Japan each month from Saipan and Guam.

As far back as June 16, 1944, about the time of the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the Japanese had felt the weight of bombs from B-29s of the 20th Bomber Command, India based and staged through China. These attacks were predominantly against conquered Chinese territory, rather than Japan itself. However, four of the 17 raids of the 20th were stretched to reach southernmost Home Island of Kyushu. It was too much of a stretch for the 20th Bomber Command to get at the highly industrialized centers of Kyushu, let alone the major Home Island of Honshu or Shikoku and Hokkaido beyond. To bring these important targets into effective range the Marianas-based 21st Bomber Command under Brigadier General H. S. Hansell was set up. These two B-29 commands, the 20th and the 21st, comprised the Twentieth Air Force, by insistence of the Army Air Force high command, an independent organization under the direct operational control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. This sometimes made it awkward for the practice of unified area command.

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume I.

3

The Japanese reacted violently to the impertinent raids on their sacred homeland. Flak was heavy but since the big bombers went in at about 30,000 feet it was not very damaging. The fighter opposition, however, was fierce and combat reports relate how "fanatical hopped-up pilots pressed their attack right down the formations' stream of fire, dove into formations to attempt rammings, and sprayed fire at random."

The "29s," in spite of their tremendous fire power, were sorely in need of fighter protection, but the distance to Japan from the Marianas was too great for the smaller, shorter-ranged planes.

The Japanese also struck back by staging aircraft south through Nanpo Shoto, the island chain that dangled perpendicularly from Tokyo. They managed to sneak in counterattacks on the home airfields of the B-29s. At the southern end of the Nanpo Shoto lay Iwo Jima, the Jap's nearest functional outpost to the Marianas. Here two airfields were in operation, and a third under construction. From Iwo rose fighter planes, the first to bite at the B-29s on their way to Japan and the last gantlet to be run by homeward-bound survivors. Also Iwo's radar station was an important outpost in Japan's air-raid warning network. The importance of Iwo to the Japanese was emphasized by the fact that it formed a part of Tokyo Prefecture.

With Iwo in American hands, not only could the B-29s be furnished with their much-needed fighter escort, but search planes could extend their sectors to cover the southern coast of Japan. Japanese patrol vessels in this area could be eliminated, thus reducing the early warnings of the B-29 raids flashed out by these picket ships. Carrier task forces could edge undetected into these waters for surprise attacks on the Home Islands.

Yes, Iwo Jima had to be taken. There were no two ways about it. And, of course, it was the Navy and the Marines who had to take it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Uncommon Valor Was a Common Virtue

I

THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN was rolling in high gear. The planners at Washington, having said "Take Iwo Jima," considered the task as good as done and were looking toward Okinawa and even to the Home Islands themselves. In fact, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Nimitz to seize one or more positions in the Nansei Shoto chain with a target date of April 1 before the Iwo Jima task forces were assembled.

MacArthur was quickly cleaning up in the Philippines and Nimitz, in the Central Pacific, was swelling the ocean with his mushrooming fleet. With each new plane, with each new gun, with each new ship, America's crushing sea might grew more powerful and more tense, like a tautly wound spring. Soon it would be released for the final, fatal blow. Japan's hours were numbered, but for Iwo Jima the last grains had already run through the glass.

It was necessary to take Iwo quickly, for Okinawa was soon to follow.

2

Iwo is a small island, a tiny island, measuring only four and a half miles in its longest direction. Like the other islands of the Volcano Chain it was belched up long ago by some fierce disturbance that shook this range of undersea mountains. It is shaped like a pork chop, with Mount Suribachi a dormant volcano at the tail, or southwestern end. The terrain is vastly different on either side of what might be known as the "waist" of the island, where the airstrips were located. The southwestern half is composed mostly of a dry, coarse, volcanic sand, with little vegetation and no natural cover of any sort except on the sides of Mount Suribachi. The northeastern half is rocky and irregular, cut up by caves and canyons, its shore line steep and rocky and fringed by outlying pinnacles.

Unlike the tropical coral atolls of the Central Pacific, Iwo Jima offered

nothing that faintly resembled a harbor except a slight indentation between the southern beaches and the rocky half of the island.

There were two possible landing beaches, one on the northern and one on the southern side of the "waist." From these beaches the terrain slopes sharply up to the barren plateau where the three airstrips were leveled. The sandy sea bottom dropped off at a steep angle on each side of the island with no rocks, reefs, or natural obstacles to tear at the bottoms of landing craft.

Because of a prevailing northerly wind, rolling up high ocean swells from the same direction, the southern beaches were selected as the spot for the ugly amphibious craft to spill the Marines ashore.

3

After the surrender of Japan, when American forces occupied the island of Chichi Jima, which is about 150 miles to the north of Iwo and part of the same chain, they encountered a Major Y. Horie who had been on the staff of General Kuribayashi. Horie had not been stationed on Iwo with Kuribayashi's main headquarters but had been put in charge of the detached headquarters on Chichi Jima with the job of keeping the supplies and communications flowing from Japan to isolated Iwo.

For the historian, Horie was a valuable person. Buttressed by an intimate knowledge of his subject, he could give the world the story of Iwo as a Japanese saw it; he could fill in the reverse pages that otherwise would have been left blank by the death of almost every Japanese on the scorched island. Urged by the American Island Commander of Chichi Jima, Colonel Rixey, Horie wrote a monograph entitled "Explanation of Japanese Defense Plan and Battle of Iwo Jima."

"To tell the truth," he wrote in stilted English, "I have a very deep impression in regard to this problem because I was concerned in defence plan of Iwo Jima and especially devoted my body and soul to its supply under my respectful Lieutenant General Kuribayashi.

"And every day since American forces landed on Iwo Jima, I wrote on my map of all battle reports communicated from Iwo Jima and studied tactics noting my opinions on it. But I am very sorry to say I had burnt all of them when Iwo fell and I have to pick it out from my poor memory.

"I am unable to state my opinion without rending my heart to many

officers and men of Japan and America who sacrificed their respectful lives . . .

"About seventy years ago Iwo Jima became the territory of Japan with Chichi Jima and Haha Jima. But we had no special product on this island and it had been written on the geographical book as only an island of sulphur spring, no water, no sparrow and no swallow . . .

"In 1943 our Navy constructed the 1st airfield (near Mt. Suribachi) on Iwo Jima and made it an intermediate aircraft base from Japan to Marianas, and used it also as an aircraft base for our convoy strategy. In February 1944 we had only 1500 men and twenty aircraft on Iwo. Later it was increased to 5000 men, both Army and Navy.

"From March to June 1944, Japanese Imperial Headquarters has sent about ten divisions to Middle Pacific area and especially did their very best to strengthen Saipan, Guam and Palao and endeavoured to re-establish our Great Fleet . . .

"June 15, American forces landed on Saipan and on 19th our Great Fleet was defeated by American 5th Fleet at 270 sea miles north of Yap Island. And Japanese Imperial Headquarters gave up their plan of repossessing Saipan and determined to reinforce Iwo Jima with a part of this repossessing strength.

"In those days we did not have any strong defence fortification on this island and it was as hazardous as a pile of eggs. At that time if American forces had assaulted Iwo Jima, it would be completely occupied in two or three days.

"On 30th of June Japanese Imperial Headquarters made the 109th Division appointing Lieutenant General Kuribayashi as the Divisional Commander, putting him under the direct command of the Imperial Headquarters. I, who had been concerned in the plan of repossessing Saipan in those days, became a staff officer of Lieutenant General Kuribayashi on the same day.

"After July we had 14,000 Army troops sent to Iwo Jima from Chichi Jima. But enemy's disturbances by air forces and submarines were severe and we had bad weather many times. So the transportation of this strength by sea delayed and continued to the very time American forces landed on Iwo Jima. Navy also increased the strength of Iwo Jima by crushing many difficulties . . .

"Army and Navy had two systems of supply. First from Tokyo direct to Iwo Jima by destroyer, high speed transport and SB (something like

the American LST but smaller in size). Second from Tokyo to Chichi Jima by ship or high speed transport, and then to Iwo Jima by sailing boats, fishing boats and SB. Most transportation belonged to the later system.

"Especially after August 1944 the power of American air force and submarines was very severe . . . We had many damages and on the sea we lost more than 1500 men and 50,000 tons of materials.

"When materials were sent to Chichi Jima from the main land of Japan, we unloaded them on Omura during darkness and intermissions of the enemy's air raids, and we dispersed them to the interior of this island.

"To Iwo Jima we sent them by sailing boats and fishing boats. This was very hard work. No harbor, rough waves and severe air raids gave the greatest hinderance to the unloading work at Iwo Jima. At Iwo Jima we could not place 'daihatsus' (landing craft) on the sea, and when we finished unloading, we had to pull them up on the land.

"In November 1944 we had only about 30 days of grain and 15 days of supplementary food, and we came to a very dangerous situation. But afterwards we were able to increase the food a little by brave and self-sacrificing transportation. I experienced how miserable our transportation by sea was when the air and sea was in the hands of enemy's control. On February 1, 1945 for our 23,000 men (Army 17,500; Navy 5,500) on Iwo Jima we had about 70 days of grain and about 60 days of supplementary food . . .

"Officers and men of Iwo Jima were suffering from lack of water. They gathered rain water in empty barrels and bottles and used it. As they were unable to take bath because of the water shortage, they were obliged to go to Kitakaigan to take hot sulphur springs. I also went to that hot spring once.

"There were no fresh vegetables and especially had many malnutrition and paratyphus patients. And in those days, I think 20% of the whole troops were patients . . .

"There were many discussions regarding the defence plan of Iwo Jima. At that time I was one of the officers who observed the situation of this war most pessimistically and insisted on my opinion as follows: 'Now we have no fleet and no air forces. If American forces will assault this island it will fall into their hands in one month. Therefore it is absolutely necessary not to let the enemy use this island. The best plan is to sink this

island in the sea or cut the island in half. At least we must endeavour to sink the 1st airfield. In the future if by any chance we have an opportunity to take an offensive step in the Pacific area, we will not use Iwo Jima.'

"At the General Staff Office and the Naval Staff Office, there were some officers who had the same ideas. Especially one staff officer asked me to calculate the necessary explosive quantity to sink Iwo Jima.

"Lieutenant General Kuribayashi also concurred with me. But in September 1944 he inspected the whole island of Iwo Jima with me and investigated how to dispose of this island, and in conclusion we found out that the disposition of this island was quite impossible and we should make this island much stronger by fortification.

"However we had the same idea that even if we place any strength on the 1st airfield it will be immediately defeated by the enemy under his severe bombardments of air forces and vessels, and it is better for us not to place any strength on this airfield. Later one staff officer of the 3rd Aircraft Fleet came to Iwo Jima and insisted on saying he should like to give many 25mm machine guns and materials from the Navy and make many pill boxes around the 1st airfield.

"In October he began to make pillboxes, using several battalions every day, and after three months he made 135. This airfield was trodden by American forces in only two days. If we had infused this great strength, many materials and three months of labor which were used on the airfield into the defence of Motoyama district and Mt. Suribachi, we would have been able to make these areas much stronger.

"We got various information that many American vessels were gathering at Ulithi, Guam and Saipan from the end of January, 1945 and we thought at Tokyo and Iwo Jima that American forces would land on Iwo Jima or Okinawa.

"We thought that if American forces land on Iwo Jima, she will occupy the 1st airfield and make an offensive base there and use many tanks . . . Many officers thought that the Divisional Commander should stay at Chichi Jima where it is convenient to control the supply and communications of all over the Bonin Islands. But Lieutenant General Kuribayashi said as follows: 'Iwo Jima is the most important island and the enemy will surely come to get it. So we should place the Divisional Headquarters at Iwo Jima.'

"Army had an opinion that they should be disposed for the defence of all over the island and Naval troops should be disposed under the

command of each district Army commander. But Navy was very anxious to defence one district by himself and insisted on that it is better to make plans for mutual understanding by strengthening the union and displaying the fighting spirit. Then in conclusion the main power of Navy was put in charge of the defence of Minamiburaku district and Army was in charge of the defence of all the rest of the island.

"The defence policy of Lieutenant General Kuribayashi was that each man should think his defence position as his graveyard, fight until the last and give many damages to the enemy . . . In order to connect with each defence position of Motoyama district, we planned to make 28,000 meters under ground tunnel and began this work in December 1944. But by the time American forces landed on Iwo Jima we only made 5,000 meters.

"Lieutenant General Kuribayashi insisted on training for bodily attacks against enemy tanks, cutting-in attacks (infiltration), and sniping. Especially he made special badges for the men who were in charge of bodily attacks against enemy tanks and men in charge of cutting-in attacks."

Major Horie then goes on to say something about his boss Kuribayashi: "He was a Cavalry officer and graduate of the Military Academy and Military College. For two years he stayed in Canada. He had a long service in the War Office and mostly appointed as staff officer. He was a poet and wrote 'Aiba Koshin Kyoku' (a song of loving horses) and 'Aikoku Koshin Kyoku' (a song of loving his nation).

"At Iwo Jima one night I talked with him thoroughly and he told me as follows: 'When I was in Canada I went to the United States and saw many factories. I pay my respects to the greatness of American mass-production. I think that 'Victory or Defeat' of this War will be decided by the production power. Don't you think so?'"

4

Lieutenant General Kuribayashi had indeed dug in well. Interlocking defense systems studded with pillboxes and gun emplacements laced the vulnerable beach area and the flanking higher ground. Rapid firing antiaircraft guns, larger-caliber coastal defense guns, fortified caves, machine-gun positions, peppered this dry crumb of Pacific real estate. And all were connected by the labyrinth of tunnels.

Ever since the previous July, soon after the Marianas had been captured, Iwo Jima and its twin, Chichi Jima, had been subjected to progressively heavy land-based bomber raids. These were augmented by carrier strikes and surface bombardments. But as the hail of bombs grew heavier, the Japs dug deeper and hit back harder. It was obvious that they could be pried loose from their island only by flame and bullet at close quarters.

5

When he thinks of a fleet, the landsman usually imagines (if versed in the old tradition) a group of battleships plowing boldly through heavy seas, their huge guns thundering in vengeful wrath. If of a newer ilk, he imagines swarm after swarm of planes leaping from the decks of mighty carriers and streaming toward the horizon to smash the enemy with bomb and torpedo. But these are partial visions. The modern fleet is a much more complex and less glamorous organization. The winning of a modern war is not so much a matter of spur-of-the-moment tactical decisions on the battlefield, or battlesea; rather it is the result of the foresight, skill, and attention to detail given to vast and complicated plans, coupled with the well-timed and determined execution of these plans.

Thus, when Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Commander of the Central Pacific Task Forces (the Fifth Fleet) was given the job of "capturing, occupying and defending Iwo Jima and developing air bases on that island," the task was not a simple one of saying "Okay, boys, finish your coffee and let's go."

The Fifth Fleet was much more than the glamorous Fast Carrier Task Forces. Numerically, these ships were a small part of the total number. There were the transports and landing ships, and their own protecting screen of destroyers, cruisers, and old battleships.

Then there was Captain George C. Montgomery's Anti-Submarine Warfare Group, composed of an escort carrier and nine destroyer escorts formed into hunter-killer groups for quick dispatch of air-sea teams to any point where an enemy sub might be discovered.

There was Rear Admiral Donald B. Beary's Logistic Support Group of fleet oilers, ammunition ships, replacement transport CVEs (loaded with planes for replacing losses on combatant carriers), escort CVEs (for protection of the Logistic Support Group itself), general store ships, avia-

tion supply ships (spare parts, etc.), towing and salvage ships and, of course, the group's own screen of destroyers and destroyer escorts. The work of this group had greatly altered historic concepts of naval strategy. Now, for the first time, logistic support was being furnished to the fleet while underway at sea. One of the great assets of sea power, its inherent mobility, was indefinitely extended.

There was, too, the Search and Reconnaissance Group of over 150 seaplanes and long-range land-based planes that spread their searches in a vast crescent from the north coast of Australia almost to the coast of China on the west and to the Japanese mainland on the north.

Afloat but stationary, Commodore Worrall R. Carter's Service Squadron 10 of some 250 auxiliary vessels anchored in Ulithi Lagoon, where it provided the fleet every form of repair and replenishment, including dry-docking, that could be supplied at a Naval Yard in the States.

The amphibious part of the Fifth Fleet was composed of the usual variegated groups closely meshed together into a compact war machine. There was the Attack Force itself with the transports, cargo vessels, LSTs, and smaller control craft. There was the Transport Screen made up of destroyers and destroyer escorts whose job was to protect the precious transports from all harm from all directions, land, sea, or air; there was the Amphibious Support Force whose escort carriers, minesweepers, gunboats, underwater demolition teams, and heavy gunfire ships were to pave the way for the landing troops.

Altogether, more than 900 ships, scattered from Hawaii to Ulithi. The grouping of these forces and the timing of their movements from different points at different speeds so as to arrive at Iwo simultaneously or in the exact sequence and interval desired was a monumental task of master planning, beyond the comprehension of the average citizen, who has difficulty timing his morning toast and coffee so as to catch the last bus to work.

6

Lieutenant General Kuribayashi knew on February 16, 1945, that he would never again see the sacred homeland. From his well-concealed command post he watched the American ships close in toward his island; he watched the carrier planes come up over the horizon, circle, and dive on his hidden guns; he watched the larger warships crawl back and

forth, beyond range of his shore batteries, firing slowly, deliberately. Sometimes the rain squalls blotted out the silhouettes of the ships but still the shells kept coming. These things and more had happened before to Iwo. It was not the bombing and bombardment that made Kuribayashi certain that his hour was at hand; it was the smaller ships that worked their way in toward the beaches—the minesweeps that trudged back and forth in precise formation less than a good rifle shot from the gun emplacements.

Kuribayashi knew that when minesweeps come, troops are not far behind. He turned and walked into his fortified cave. Very well, let them come. He was ready for them!

These ships that had thrown a ring of guns around Iwo and had capped it with restless aircraft belonged to the Amphibious Support Force composed of Rear Admiral William H. P. Blandy's Task Force 52 and Rear Admiral Bertram J. Rodgers's Task Force 54. Its job: to probe the beaches and soften the defenses for three days prior to the main attack. Special hydrographic observers examined the beaches from the air while destroyer transports nosed in to 3,000 yards for a good surface look-see. The only mine encountered by Rear Admiral Alexander Sharp's sweeping group was an old one that had obviously floated in from another part of the ocean, but still the whole offshore area had to be methodically swept. One never could be sure.

The aircraft that buzzed busily around Iwo that first day flew from Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin's Support Carrier Group, which contained eleven escort carriers, some of which had been in the historic fight off Leyte Gulf the previous October. The heavier ships of the Gunfire and Covering Force (TF 54) contained seven old battleships: *MAHO* (Captain Herbert J. Grassie), *TENNESSEE* (Captain John B. Hefernan), *WEST VIRGINIA* (Captain Herbert V. Wiley), *ARKANSAS* (Captain George M. O'Rear), *TEXAS* (Captain Charles A. Baker), *NEW YORK* (Captain Kemp C. Christian), and *NEVADA* (Captain Homer L. Grosskopf), the last four fresh from Europe and participating in their first Pacific invasion; four heavy cruisers, *TUSCALOOSA* (Captain James G. Atkins), *CHESTER* (Captain Henry Hartley), *PENSACOLA* (Captain Allen P. Mullinix), and *SALT LAKE CITY* (Captain Edward A. Mitchell); and fifteen destroyers. Further punch was added by Captain Theodore C. Aylward's Gunboat Support Group, Captain Eugene C. Rook's Mortar Support Group, and Commander Clarence E. Coffin's Rocket Support

Group. Each of these groups consisted of a dozen or two landing craft (LCIs), equipped with special guns instead of troops.

The first day was rather routine. One shore battery which opened up on a minesweeper off the southeastern beaches was quickly silenced by destroyer fire. Two Jap luggers were spotted and sunk by aircraft, but since a low ceiling covered the sky and intermittent showers swept over the island, neither the air strikes nor the bombardments did much damage. Besides, Kuribayashi was burrowed under the tough rock. It was like shooting at a turtle with a bee-bee gun.

(On the same day, February 16, the air-raid sirens of Tokyo sent their long, stringy wails across the sprawling city. But this time the attackers were not the expected B-29s. The small, quick planes that ripped earthward from overcast skies to blast selected targets with rocket and bomb could have come from only one source—carriers! It was the fulfillment of a long-cherished ambition of the Fast Carrier Task Forces, this first raid on the Home Islands, and it was also part of the master plan to isolate Iwo Jima from all aircraft reinforcements. Nothing could have emphasized more clearly that Japan, having lost her fleet, had in reality lost the war. She was no longer even mistress of the Inland Sea. But that belongs in a later chapter.)

7

Next day things at Iwo began to quicken—the beginning of a terrifying crescendo that was to reach its climax in the fiercest landing fight the world has ever seen. Promptly at 7 A.M. fire support ships, after their night's retirement seaward, returned to station and commenced their bombardment. The carriers sent a strike against near-by Chichi Jima to discourage counterattacks from any Jap planes that might still be operational. At 0938, PENSACOLA, off the northwestern beaches, suddenly was straddled by salvos from hidden shore batteries. This was quickly followed by six direct hits which tore into the Combat Information Center, destroyed the secondary conn and set fire to the starboard catapult plane. Personnel casualties were heavy but PENSACOLA, blazing amidships, continued to fire as she withdrew. Only while her wounded were being operated on or being given blood transfusions did her salvos pause.

The minesweepers, in precise and dignified formation, continued to

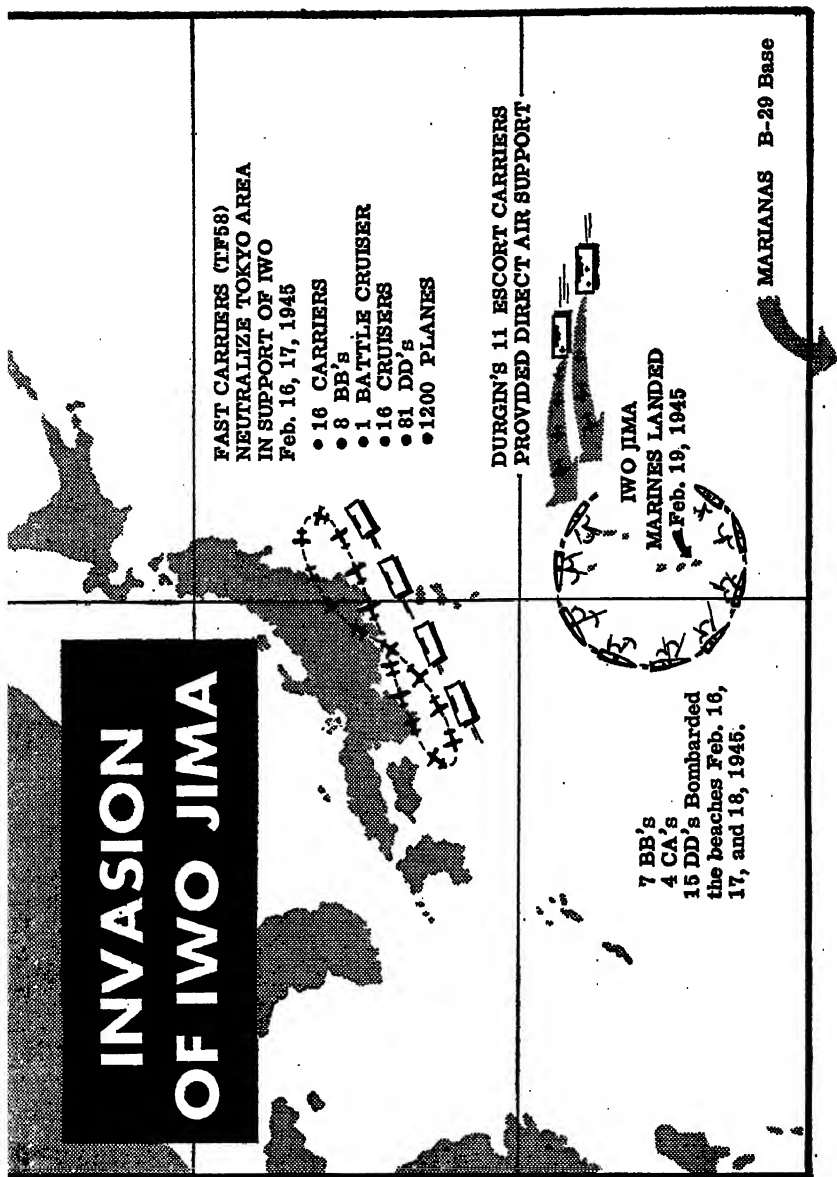


FIGURE 5

pass close under the shore batteries without deviating from their prescribed tracks, firing as they went. After the last sweep in late morning, Underwater Demolition Teams, supported by gunboats, moved in to scout the shallow water along the beaches.

Captain B. Hall Hanlon, Commander of Underwater Demolition Teams, had trained his men well. The day before they had placed a navigational blinker light on Higashi Iwa, a small rocky island 3,000 yards to the eastward of Iwo. Now they moved in toward the southern beaches in small, fast boats—LCP(R)s.

To seaward the larger vessels, battleships and cruisers, threw ton after ton of explosives into Mount Suribachi on the left flank of the southern beaches and into the high rocky cliffs on the right flank. About 3,000 yards offshore a line of seven destroyers—CAPPS (Commander James M. Wood), LEUTZE (Commander Berton A. Robbins, Jr.), BRYANT (Commander George C. Seay), TWIGGS (Commander George Phillips), HALL (Commander Laurence C. Baldauf), PAUL HAMILTON (Commander Daniel Carlson), and HENLEY (Commander Charles H. Smith)—was drawn up for close support fire. Seven gunboats—LCI(G)s 473, 450, 474, 438, 449, 441, 457, all equipped with rockets and automatic weapons—nosed through the destroyer line at 10:30 A.M. with the small boats carrying the UDT swimmers trailing behind.

Eleven o'clock was Roger Hour—the time that the small boats would pass through the gunboat line at 2,000 yards from the black sand of the beach. The gunboats then would follow the small craft in to 1,000 yards, spitting at the beach defenses with everything they had, while the swimmers slipped into the chill water.

The task of these brawny men, armed with only a knife and clothed only in swimming trunks, was a difficult and important one. Feeling their way toward the beaches—sometimes even as far in as the breaking surf—they searched for shallow water mines and underwater obstacles, either man-made or natural; they took careful note of the beaches, the kind of sand, the slope of the bottom, the surf conditions; they noted the direction of the currents and surveyed the contour of the land. With the information brought back by these swimmers, information impossible to obtain from photographs, the last pieces of the landing mosaic were fitted together.

A little before eleven, with the LCIs near the 2,000-yard line, all hell broke loose. Heavy enemy fire rained down from both flanks—5-inch

shells, large mortars, 37mm and 25mm automatic fire, and machine-gun bullets.

"At first," related Lieutenant (jg) Matthew J. Reichl, commanding officer of the LCI(G) 474, "we thought that the shell splashes between us and the beach were shots from our own ships falling short, but as these splashes walked up towards the gunboats on our port hand and then swung over to us, we realized that it was return fire from Jap shore batteries. This fire was coming from both the northern and southern flanks of the beach. We immediately commenced heavy 40mm and 20mm strafing while maneuvering as radically as possible in our small area attempting to avoid hits."

But none of the little ships could wiggle radically enough to throw off the sharp-eyed Jap gunners and all of them were hit. Still they kept closing the beach. Within eight minutes Reichl's ship took fourteen hits. Guns and rockets were knocked out, compartments began to flood, fires broke out, and ammunition began to explode. It was the same on all the gunboats. It seemed to happen all at once. Salvo after salvo tore into their fragile hulls, buckling decks, cutting large jagged holes through the bulkheads, splattering blood and flesh. One LCI, hit in the bridge, raced out to sea out of control, barely missing HENLEY. The others stayed on to slug it out with the island pillboxes which lay palled in smoke and dust.

Reserve gunboats, LCI(G)s, 466, 471, 469, 346, and 348, were immediately sent in by Commander Michael J. Malanphy, Commander LCI Flotilla 3, to relieve their wounded brothers. Meanwhile the destroyers bombarded the shore for a thousand yards inland with white phosphorous shells to distract and terrify the Japanese.

Like punch-drunk boxers the LCI(G)s now came reeling back through the destroyer line which had been pushed up to the 2,000-yard mark. The 474, rolling heavily, came alongside the destroyer CAPPS and transferred her wounded before she rolled completely over. A few bursts of 40mm fire from the destroyer completed the job the Japs had begun, and 474 went down to a final resting place among the underwater mountains of the Pacific.

"During the reconnaissance the LCI(G)s in close support," wrote Captain Hanlon in his report, "moved in to 1,000 yards where they immediately began to receive effective fire from enemy mortars and fixed artillery. The personnel of these gunboats returned fire with all weapons and refused to move out until they were forced to do so by material and

personnel casualties. Even then some returned to their stations until again hit. Relief gunboats replaced damaged ships without hesitation."

Soon after noon the reconnaissance was completed. Remarkably enough, all but one of the swimmers were recovered and the small boats headed back to the mother ships—destroyer transports BATES (Lieutenant Commander Henry A. Wilmerding), BARR (Lieutenant Commander Porter T. Dickie), BULL (Lieutenant Commander John B. McLaughlin), and BLESSMAN (Lieutenant Peter LeBoutillier).

Of the twelve gunboats involved in the close support ten had been badly hit. Casualties were high—44 dead and 151 wounded. Three of the little ships limped painfully out to the old battleship TENNESSEE and transferred their wounded to her spacious sick bay. Then from the sailmaker of TENNESSEE they obtained heavy canvas for the most painful job of all—burial of the dead.

After the bodies had been wrapped tightly in the weighted canvas, the depleted ship's company, still grimy and nervous from battle, was called to quarters. A young ensign, who had never thought that someday he would serve as chaplain, began the ancient prayers for burial at sea: "Unto the deep we commit this body, O Lord. . . ." One by one the bodies were slipped gently over the side. The splash was hardly distinguishable from the water slapping against the hull.

8

The concealed Jap shore batteries had also reached out a long arm that morning and hit the LEUTZE, a covering destroyer. The shell ripped into the superstructure wounding five men including the captain, Commander Berton A. Robbins, Jr., who was paralyzed by a piece of flying steel that dug into his neck.

The reconnaissance of the western beaches was carried out that afternoon by the UDTs. This time the support was furnished by destroyers, since only two gunboats were still fit for action. Fire from the Japs was less intense and there were no casualties. The UDTers found that, as on the eastern beaches, there were no underwater obstructions, no demolition would be necessary, and surf and beach conditions were suitable for a landing.

By the end of the day, Iwo had been sized up. Minesweepers had completed their work and bombardment ships had buried a few Jap

pillboxes and shore defense guns. The old NEVADA had closed to 2,500 yards and silenced a particularly troublesome battery that had thrown a number of well-placed shells into the gunboats.

These gunboats had unwittingly caused the Japanese to tip their hand. The minesweepers had marched back and forth under the mouths of the shore guns and had not been fired on. The Japs knew that there were no mines around the island and it was not worth disclosing their position to fire on the sweepers. But when the gunboats approached—they were the same type ship used to land troops—with the small UDT boats trailing in their wakes, the Japanese evidently thought that this was the beginning of the invasion. Had not two batteries of coast defense guns, flanking the southeastern beach and extremely well concealed, opened up prematurely on D-minus-2-day and disclosed their position, disastrous losses among the landing troops might have resulted on D-day.

That night, as usual, the support forces withdrew to seaward leaving only a few destroyers to harass the burrowed Japs.

Early the next morning planes and ships moved in for the final softening of the unlovely volcanic island. "Close the beach and get going," were Rear Admiral Bertram J. Rodgers's words to his Gunfire and Covering Force. Main and secondary batteries chiseled away at Mount Suribachi, which stood like a naked tooth on the left flank of the landing beaches. Shells were hurled at the concrete casemated artillery positions on the cliffed high ground on the right flank. Fires, big and small, blazed up like struck matches. An ammunition dump blew up in a cascade of streaking sparks. Between the water's edge and the Motoyama Airfield no. 1, which lay halfway between the eastern and western beaches, the soft sand was pocked with huge craters from hundreds of bombs and shells. Japanese planes lay broken and twisted over the deserted airfield, making the once-powerful interceptor base look like a rusting junkyard.

The old battleships behaved like octogenarians with new glands. The TENNESSEE, IDAHO, NEVADA, NEW YORK, and TEXAS punched at the bald island with everything from 14-inch main batteries to 40mm. That old Pacific veteran, the cruiser SALT LAKE CITY, whose ugly squared lines had earned her the affectionate nickname "Swayback Maru," hit hard at a target now familiar, for she had often shelled Iwo before, in bombardment raids. This time she was to spend 25 days within sight of Suribachi and was to throw more shells into its tattered face than any other ship there.

Early in the afternoon Rear Admiral Blandy (CTF 52) asked Rear Admiral Rodgers whether he thought that enough of the Jap positions had been destroyed to permit the landing to proceed on schedule the next morning. Rodgers replied that he thought so, provided his ships remained there to give the troops close pin-point gunfire.

That night, as the ships pulled away from the island, the Japs made a quick sharp bite at the Americans with a few planes. Two ships were hit, the destroyer minesweeper *GAMBLE* (Commander Donald N. Clay) and the destroyer transport *BLESSMAN*. The damage was not great but both ships had to retire to Saipan, *BLESSMAN* under tow. The *BLESSMAN* suffered heavy casualties from that lone bombing—24 killed and 6 wounded. Ironically enough, many of the casualties were among Underwater Demolition Team 15, who were embarked on the transport. These men had come through their dangerous reconnaissance assignment only to be killed in what they thought to be the comparative safety of their ship.

On one of the escort carriers hovering near the island, the loud-speaker system sent a familiar voice to all corners of the ship: "This is the Captain, men."

All hands on *BISMARCK SEA* cocked an ear to hear—the shadowy figures at the guns surrounded by darkness and wind cupped their hands to their ears: the sweat-wet men below decks in the engine rooms crowded close to the speaker so that they could hear above the ear-numbing noise of the engines; the grease-covered mechanics on the hangar deck, tools in hand, paused in their final adjustments on the planes.

"Tonight we are in Japanese waters as part of a well-trained, powerful fleet. The bombs, rockets, and bullets which our planes will rain down on the Nips may be likened to arrows which are striking nearer and nearer to the heart of Japan. Our ship is the bow. Every man on board is one of the fibers of the bow. Each one of you, regardless of your job, has a part in the success we will achieve and the terror we are creating in the minds of those little men who thought they could defeat America.

"I know I speak for all of us when I say to the pilots and aircrewmembers, good luck and good hunting. Remember that every gun you knock out means you have saved the lives of a lot of our troops. The deck will be clear and waiting for your return . . ."

Then the chaplain:

"Almighty God, whose power no creature is able to resist, we humbly beseech Thee to behold us as seeking to serve for righteousness . . .

May we have ears to hear the call to battle, eyes to see the enemy, and skill to save our ship, our planes, and ourselves from the hand of evil . . . May the Lord bless us and keep us, may the Lord make His countenance to shine upon us and give us peace . . .”

It was the last time Chaplain Eugene R. Shannon would address a crew. It was the last time nearly half the crew would see the dawn of battle.

9

Iwo's hour had come.

In the darkness before the morning twilight of February 19, 1945, the sea to the south of Iwo Jima was a mass of blacked-out ships. Silently, but swiftly, they converged on the tiny hump of land, like hungry roaches racing for a crust of bread.

Aboard these ships were the shock troops of the nation, the United States Marines—three divisions of them.

All the leaders and commanders were experienced veterans of other amphibious assaults. In charge of all the Expeditionary Troops (TF 56) was that leathery, bespectacled fighter Lieutenant General H. M. (“Howlin’ Mad”) Smith whose advice to his men was simple and direct: “Get on their tails and stay there.”

Major General Harry Schmidt, commanding general of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, was in over-all command of the landing forces comprising the 4th Marine Division (Major General C. B. Cates), the 5th Marine Division (Major General K. E. Rockey) as yet untried as a combat unit, and the 3rd Marine Division (Major General C. B. Erskine) which was to serve as a reserve force.

These divisions were soon to experience the fiercest fighting in the history of the Marine Corps, not excepting Chateau-Thierry and Guadalcanal. In these divisions were men who would make of themselves and their effort a national symbol, a patriotic rallying point. These men, now fresh-washed and clean-shaved, in a few hours would be saturated with the grime, sweat, and blood of battle. As they sat in little groups talking or silently smoking, dozed with heads leaned against hard bulkheads, or checked equipment for the dozenth time, many of them remembered battle. Remembered anger, fear, elation, pain. Remembered hoarse shouts, sharp screams, the quick crash of bursting shells, and the solitary

whine of a sniper's bullet. And the low moan of a fallen comrade. But no memory could evoke the living hell they were soon to experience.

Not that anybody thought Iwo would be easy. All knew that a skilled, determined enemy was dug in well on the little two-by-four island, a perfect fortress. And the generals knew that there were a lot of these determined little men—perhaps 15,000 of them. Howlin' Mad Smith warned: "This operation is not a setup. Every Japanese—cook, baker, or candlestick maker—will be down on that beach with some kind of weapon. They're all dug in underground and we'll have to dig them out. It'll be a frontal attack, an attack in force. Almost every weapon on that island can reach the beaches. We're going to take some heavy losses, perhaps 40 per cent. But we've taken it before and we'll take it again if necessary. We'll take the island quickly. That's the way the Marines work. We're not accustomed to occupying defensive positions. It's destructive to morale. We have never failed and we won't fail here. It's a tough proposition but that's the reason we are here."

It was the job of Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill, Commander of the Attack Force (TF 53), to put the Marines ashore at 9:00 A.M., two hours after sunrise.

By dawn the transports were hove-to about eight miles off the southeastern beaches in two groups. The weather had cleared and the seas had subsided. Transport Group ABLE carrying the 5th Marines was on the left to the southwest and Transport Group BAKER on the right to the northeast. Rear Admiral Hill's flagship, the command ship AUBURN, was with the northern group while Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, in over-all command of the Joint Expeditionary Force, rode with the southern group in his flagship EL DORADO. Also on board EL DORADO were Howlin' Mad and an alert, tight-lipped civilian—the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal.

The transports lowered their boats, LCMs and LCVPs, and the Marines swarmed over the side. Then, packed with men and equipment, the boats circled the transports waiting for the signal to make the run in toward the line of departure.

The plodding LSTs detached themselves from the transports and moved in to a point about three miles offshore where, like sleepy men yawning in the early light, they flung open their bows and disgorged their bellyload of ugly amphibious craft, LVTs, DUKWs, LVT(A)s, filled with assault troops.

"The central control vessel of the assault waves," related Captain Bruce B. Adell, Central Control Officer of Assault Wave, "was the PCE 877. All of her circuits were not used for transmitting. Most of them were used for listening in and obtaining information necessary to coordinate the activities of all the assault units, the LSTs, each one crammed with amtracs or amphibious tanks, or DUKWs loaded with the corps' artillery. We had other landing craft, too, LSDs—landing ship, dock—each carrying three LCIs, each in their turn carrying five to six medium tanks. LSMs, smaller and faster than LSTs, also carried tanks. And LCI(G) gunboats, and LCS(L) combination gunboats and rocket ships, about 500 in all.

"The line of departure on which the control vessel was stationed was 4,000 yards from the beach. On either flank rocket ships were stationed along with gunfire support ships. Mount Suribachi, on our left flank was kept under constant heavy fire. We could easily see the caves and openings for gun emplacements. Ahead the land was low and flat. But on our right flank, on the Blue Beaches, there was a 100-foot cliff, heavily fortified. The LVTs, amphibious tanks, about 500 in all, formed up behind the line of departure. These LVTs can operate only at low speeds so they had to be in exact position at the exact time . . ."

Meanwhile Iwo was smothered under bomb and shell. At 6:40 A.M. the fire support battleships and cruisers started belching steel death. The newer battleships WASHINGTON (Captain Roscoe F. Good) and NORTH CAROLINA (Captain Oswald S. Colclough), who had recently joined the bombardment, lay off at medium range while the old battleships and cruisers moved to within several thousand yards to deliver their broadsides. One of the cruisers, CHESTER (Captain Henry Hartley), was damaged considerably when she collided with Admiral Blandy's flagship ESTES (Captain Bob O. Mathews) but nevertheless she continued to deliver her fire.

Into the rugged volcanic crags of Suribachi, into the severe, steep defiles that sloped to the sea from the Motoyama tableland, into the cliffs and sand, everywhere the shells hailed in. Then the carriers threw in their weight—and it was a heavy weight now, for the Fifth Fleet had returned from the cold, wind-whipped coasts of Japan to support the invasion. Iwo was feeling the tremendous pressure of a whole nation on its eight square miles of volcanic rock and sand.

Seventy-two bombers, fighters, and torpedo planes winged in to bomb

and strafe. Some smashed at Mount Suribachi, some at the cliffs and high land flanking the beaches to the right, but most saturated the beach itself with thunderous explosions. The very birth of Iwo Jima from its volcanic womb could not have been attended with more fury.

While the whole area shook from the concussion of hundreds of explosions, the leading wave of amphibious vehicles took station about 200 yards to seaward of the firing line. Behind them other amphibys followed by Higgins boats formed up in parallel lines. In the van a small escort vessel moving like a sheep dog directed the show with the aid of a loud-speaker.

The *TENNESSEE* at the time was lying broadside to the island, her starboard side engaged.

"Attention *TENNESSEE*," blared the speaker from the escort vessel. "You are on the line of departure."

From the quarterdeck of the battleship came the unofficial but quick reply: "What do you expect us to do, push this big tub sideways?"

At 0835 the first wave of amphibious vehicles started their long run toward the beach, toward the unknown. They came in line, in precise formation with the successive waves following close behind. Movements were timed to the second. It looked like an old massed infantry charge with each man keeping his exact position and moving forward with steady pace, waiting for the enemy to open fire, hoping that his name would not be on the bullet.

The tempo of shelling from the firing line increased. The noise slid upward in a violent charivari of death, lashed at the ears and beat into the brain. Rocket-bristling gunboats, like infuriated porcupines, moved in close and bathed the beaches with arching, hissing death. Carrier planes zoomed low behind the beaches and planted a thick, woolly smoke screen. Fighters in pairs strafed the beaches. Soon the shore line and the whole side of frowning Suribachi were obscured by flames and smoke.

Wave after wave of landing craft slid by the bombarding ships, eight boats in each wave, each wave 300 yards apart. Precisely as the leading troop carriers reached a line 300 yards from the beach, the bombardment ships rolled their fire inland. The first wave touched the beach exactly on schedule at 0900, landing its human cargo on a 3,000-yard front in three minutes to cover practically the whole length of the southeastern beaches. The 5th Marines were on the left, near the volcano; the 4th Marines on the right, near the high rocky cliffs at the northern end of the beach.

Enemy mortar and artillery fire had not been heavy in the boat lanes during the approach, but soon after the landing Jap shells began to crash into the beach area and boat lanes with great accuracy.

Out of the surf with the first contingent waddled the floating tanks, firing 75mm cannon and heavy machine guns as they came on like fire-spouting sea dragons. A minute behind came the second wave of Marine infantry, and within three minutes the third. The remainder were put ashore at 5 minute intervals, for the beach was getting crowded.

Twenty-five feet back from the water's edge rose a steep sandy terrace, thrown up by the ceaseless washing waves. The black sand that from the sea looked firm as a black-top road swallowed men's feet to the ankle as they slushed up the slope and quickly moved inland for 350 yards. From the top of the terrace the beach rose gradually to a central plateau where Motoyama Airfield No. 1 was located.

From the sea the first contingent of assault troops could be seen pushing up the sliding surface of the terrace, to be briefly silhouetted against the sky line at the southeast end of the airfield. At the signal that the initial perimeter was secured, larger troop units that crouched behind the terrace on the beachhead followed inland. The plan was for the 5th Marines to cross the narrow (800 yard) lower end of the island and wheel right except for one regimental combat team (RCT) which was to pivot left against Mount Suribachi. The 4th Marines pivoted right in a tight turn against the cliffed, craggy terrain. The eventual front of the two divisions had to extend across the long axis of the island and face toward its northeastern half where the main Jap forces and defenses were concentrated.

As the second assault units began moving across the open space between the shore line and the advanced perimeter, Jap opposition stiffened. From the high ground on both flanks rocket, mortar, and artillery fire came pouring in on the exposed Marines. The rolling naval barrage was immediately discontinued and fire shifted to the flanks. Jap mortar shells erupted in the knots of men huddled along the shore and among the thin line of Marines edging up the sandy incline toward the airfield. One enemy battery belched death down the entire length of the beach. Now and then a land mine exploded blowing the tread off a tank or amphibious tractor. One tank that started to thread its way between the beach and the airfield was knocked out by a Jap shell. Other tanks bogged down and tipped on their sides in the loose sand, helpless, targets

to be picked off at leisure by Jap gunners or to be quickly swamped by the 4-foot-high surf that broke directly on the beach. Some tanks stripped their tracks trying to make a turn in the sand after debarkation from LSMs. The LSMs 74, 145, 211, and 323 were all hit by mortar fire while beached. Other landing craft, such as LCVPs and LCMs, although able to beach initially without difficulty, were swamped by large waves breaking over their sterns or by the heavy backwash of surf rushing in over their ramps. Many small craft were picked up bodily by the waves, like driftwood, and thrown broadside onto the beach.

Enemy mortar fire in a deadly quickstep marched up and down the beach, sending up mushrooms of smoke and dust, water and splinters. The beach was soon a hell-broth of dead and wounded men, wrecked tanks and smashed landing craft, wheeled vehicles bogged to their frames, abandoned tractors. But the losses had to be accepted. The beachhead had to be secured.

On the left the 5th Marine Division advanced rapidly across the narrow part of the island, capturing the southwest end of Airfield No. 1 by noon and pivoting their RCT 28 to the left against Suribachi while the rest of the division pushed across the waist of the island to the northwest beaches.

The 4th Marines on the right, advancing across the steep and open slopes leading up the airfield immediately ran into stiff resistance. They suffered heavy casualties from the frontal and enfilading fire of machine guns and mortars and from thickly planted land mines. Although reserve battalions were thrown into the action the 4th Marines were not able to expand their initially established gains.

Overhead circled planes from the fast carriers and the escort carriers. Some were on photographic missions, some were carrying observers and co-ordinators; most were there to pounce on targets indicated by the sweating troops.

"Particularly interesting in this operation," said Lieutenant Commander John McClain, who had a ringside seat on Admiral Hill's flagship, AUBURN (Captain Ralph O. Myers), "was the close use of air support. As soon as the ground-air liaison officers were sure they were in direct touch with the control room of the headquarters ship, they began calling for strikes on pillboxes, gun emplacements, and other tough resistance spots. From the headquarters ship you could hear the liaison officer calling the ship. You could hear the support commander aboard the ship talking

to his air observer over the target, and then by going up on deck you could see—a few minutes later—the strike coming in exactly where it was called for.”

Naval gunfire spotters also hovered over the smoldering target, not only in float planes catapulted from the cruisers and destroyers but, for the first time in an amphibious operation, a specially trained escort carrier squadron—from the WAKE ISLAND (Captain Austen V. Magly)—was used primarily as naval gunfire spotters. The aircraft had no unmolested view. Antiaircraft fire was heavy. Men on the bridge of TENNESSEE saw their own spotter plane crash into the sea, its tail sheared off by a shell. The RUDYERD BAY (Captain Clare S. Smiley) lost a torpedo bomber carrying an observer from the 5th Marine Division.

The whole landing was held together and co-ordinated by the tenuous strings of radio. The Japanese attempted to throw a musical monkey wrench into this command machinery by jamming the radios with phonograph records—“right on the operating frequencies.” Combat information officers pulled their hair and cursed the wailing, whining Japanese songs. Even Bing Crosby wouldn’t have been welcomed that day.

By nightfall all the assault elements of both Marine divisions had been landed plus artillery, tanks, and supporting arms. A total of 30,000 men had been put ashore on the narrow strip of sand. At 1800 General Schmidt ordered the troops to dig in for the night and prepare to resume the advance the next morning. Although the beachheads had been firmly established, the lines that bisected the island were vulnerable to counter-attack, especially in the center along the edge of the airfield and on the right flank.

Digging in was easier said than done. The black volcanic sand flowed almost like liquid. Any sort of foxhole, trench, embankment, or excavation had to be completely revetted with boards, matting, sandbags, or something solid to keep it from caving in. Otherwise only a saucerlike depression could be dug.

The sand was as permeating as a noxious gas. It got in the eyes and the mouth, it clotted the hair and seeped through the clothing, it filled the shoes and fouled the breech mechanisms of the guns. It stifled and choked, and drew as many curses as the Japanese.

There was no sleep for American or Jap that first night on Iwo. The Marines expected a counterattack and lay tensely waiting. Eleven bombardment ships stayed close in, constantly illuminating the island with

pale-green star shells. Long streams of red and green tracers arched into the Jap positions on either flank and chewed at Suribachi's dome. Now and then a white phosphorous burst blossomed evilly. Iwo quivered with shifting shadows and dancing, leering lights. Overhead, high in the sky, an almost full moon threw a calm shaft of light across the dark waters, and glinted on the wings of the all-night combat air patrol from SARATOGA (Captain Lucian A. Moebus) and ENTERPRISE (Captain Grover B. H. Hall).

Some 75 miles to the northwest of Iwo rode two fast carrier task groups—Rear Admiral Ralph E. Davison's 58.2 and Rear Admiral Frederick C. Sherman's 58.3. About a dozen Jap planes came in on them that night, their way lit up by the bright moon. But the two groups quickly swarmed under cloud cover, laying a screen of ghostlike smoke and throwing up heavy AA fire. The new battleship MISSOURI (Captain William M. Callaghan), in action for the first time, shot down a twin-engined bomber. The destroyer HUNT (Commander Halford A. Knoetzer) and a night fighter from ENTERPRISE added one apiece. None of the Jap attacks was pressed home and by 2200 the radar screens were clear.

IO

"Hurry! Hurry! The Japs are sneaking through!"

The radioed alarm to the support ships was the cockcrow of the first morning ashore. But there was no banzai charge. Lieutenant General Kuribayashi had better use for his men. He had thrust a slender probe into the 5th Marine's flank. They broke it off, short.

But the ships' guns spoke, just the same, and were joined by field artillery and aircraft, clearing as best they could a path for the troops' scheduled advance. Jumping off at 0830, two Marine divisions slowly began to compress the Japanese defenders into the rugged northeastern half of the island, while RCT 28 drew a noose tighter and tighter around Mount Suribachi in the south. Resistance was as tough as flint; each Jap position had to be eliminated separately.

And there was trouble again at the beaches. Working desperately against time through the night, the underwater demolition teams by six in the morning had cleared up the mess of the day before. But by 0930 the beaches were again closed by pounded wreckage.

"To make matters worse," Captain Adell relates, "the weather was

blowing up and we had a strong current running parallel to the beach. Loading was difficult in the transport areas because of the high waves. Amtracs which were shuttling back and forth from the beaches carrying the precious water and ammunition, had great difficulty in re-embarking in their LSTs. While waiting their turn to go up the ramp, many would be blown clear of the formation and several drifted out to sea. As soon as an LVT engine stops they are liable to sink because these engines must be kept running to keep the pumps going. Control vessels not needed on the line of departure were ordered out to the rescue."

Somehow, the supplies kept coming in and the Marines kept fighting. By the end of the day they had advanced from 500 to 1,000 yards, and had overrun Airfield No. 1. But now there was a countercurrent to the human stream pouring inland, the sluggish flow of the wounded flowing back across the dry, black sand, over the wreckage of the beaches, through the pounding surf and out to the hospital LST to be doctored and sent on to the larger transports. Already it was apparent that a grim price would have to be paid for Iwo. Two days—3,000 casualties.

The fighting had settled down to a mutual butchery.

II

In the early evening of February 21 the Japanese fell from the skies with the fury of wind devils.

The SARATOGA, oldest carrier in the fleet, lightly screened by three destroyers—MELVIN (Commander Barry K. Atkins), MC NAIR (Commander Montgomery L. McCullough, Jr.) and MC GOWAN (Commander William R. Cox)—was steaming to the east of Iwo preparing to launch planes for a rocket-firing fighter attack on Chichi Jima to the north as well as the NATO (Night Aerial Target Observer) over Iwo. Overhead the combat air patrol circled like sharp-eyed cats, watching for enemy planes—"bandits."

Old "Sara" had the night shift by herself. That morning ENTERPRISE, only other night carrier with the fleet, had accompanied the other fast carriers for another attack on Tokyo.

On the SARATOGA's bridge the sqawk-box bawled a warning from the radar room: "Bogeys bearing zero-zero-zero, range 75 miles! Half a dozen at about 10,000 feet."

The report was immediately passed on to the Task Group Commander

in the nearby escort carriers. Soon the evaluation came back: "Returning itinerant friendlies."

Lieutenant William Jardine, "Sara's" fighter director officer, wasn't satisfied. He vectored two fighters out to investigate. When the number of bogeys increased to over a dozen, he started launching all available aircraft, to make doubly certain. But when the group split in two and one section headed straight in on an attack course, all doubts were confirmed.

The nerve-scraping shriek of the general alarm tore through the ship: General Quarters!

Nine minutes before five in the afternoon two of Sara's fighters charged into the onrushing enemy and shot down two Zekes. Still the Japs pressed in. Finally they came into plain view, dropping from the clouds on the starboard quarter, coming in low. Red tracers tore bloody scratches across the sky. Six enemy planes came through, weaving and bobbing crazily.

The first plane struck at three minutes after five, flying the length of the flight deck and crashing into the bow. A second dropped its bomb on the forward part of the flight deck and then skidded across into the sea. The whole forward part of SARATOGA exploded into flame.

Two more Kamikazes screeched in from starboard through a tangled web of gunfire. Both were hit, and one had a wing chewed off, but it was like trying to stop a charging rhinoceros with slingshots. One crashed the ship's side, smashing through three thick steel bulkheads, rupturing a gas line, and finally exploding into the hangar deck. Planes and gasoline torched off as quickly as Fourth of July sparklers. The plane with the severed wing crashed into the sea close aboard but its bomb ricocheted into the side of the carrier and tore open a hole below the waterline.

The fifth sacrificer crashed into the flight deck spraying the starboard gun gallery with a lethal shower of flaming gasoline.

The sixth, and last, Japanese crashed into the sea on the starboard quarter but his 500-pound bomb also leaped through the water to explode against the ship's side, tearing a 40-foot hole in the hull.

No carrier should have lived through such shattering punishment, but Sara did. In less than two hours, damage-control parties under supervision of Lieutenant Commander Bernard R. Tarrant had the flames under control.

But still all was not over for the most gallant ship. With the sea

mantled in darkness the Japanese returned. Flares were dropped on either side of the wounded carrier and a group of planes started in from port. The screening destroyers got four, the Sara's gunners five. But one slipped through and planted a monster 1,600-pound bomb on the flight deck just aft of the previous explosions, blasting a jagged hole 30 feet in diameter through five decks. The explosion shook Sara from anchor windlass to stern tubes—but still she lived. No other ship had ever absorbed so much punishment. Lieutenant Commander Vincent F. McCormack, skipper of Air Group 53 on SARATOGA, had been on Sara's sister ship, the old "Lex," when she went down after the Battle of the Coral Sea. Sara's fires were more violent, he said, than those that sank her sister.

Although with only half a flight deck, Sara was ready to land her orbiting aircraft two hours afterward. One pilot made a particularly beautiful landing, without lights. When he stepped from his plane he turned to the landing officer and remarked: "I understand the SARATOGA is really catching hell tonight."

He was a pilot from one of the escort carriers who thought he had landed on the BISMARCK SEA.

While the SARATOGA fought for her life, she saw this same BISMARCK SEA lose hers.

12

The BISMARCK SEA was one of six light escort carriers combined into a single task group which included MAKIN ISLAND (Captain William B. Whaley, Jr.), LUNGA POINT (Captain George A. T. Washburn), SAGINAW BAY (Captain Frank C. Sutton), RUDYERD BAY (Captain Clare S. Smiley), ANZIO (Captain George C. Montgomery), and the escort screen. The group was heading into the wind to recover their own aircraft and planes from the heavily engaged SARATOGA. The wind had risen to 22 knots so the group speed was only 8 knots, thus creating an ample 30-knot wind over the decks.

By sunset, at 6:25 P.M., BISMARCK SEA had recovered all her planes and three extra, including one torpedo plane from SARATOGA. With no extra room on deck these three planes had to be struck below before they could be degassed.

For some time there had been a number of unidentified bogeys on

the radar screen. The BISMARCK SEA gunners had shot down one Nip that was seen heading for LUNGA POINT, but in the half-light it was difficult to distinguish enemy planes from the temporarily roostless SARATOGA planes.

Suddenly lookouts on BISMARCK SEA saw a lone plane coming in low, toward a screening destroyer on the beam. No one fired. Just as he got to the destroyer he dodged around the stern and headed straight for the little carrier. Kamikaze!

The jeep carrier's guns could not open up for fear of hitting the destroyer. But there was no time anyway—only three or four seconds.

"It plowed into us," related Captain John L. Pratt, skipper of the little carrier, "abeam of the after elevator between the waterline and the flight deck. The elevator cables were parted and the elevator fell to the bottom of its well. Water curtains and sprinklers were immediately turned on, but due to the damage to the fire main the water curtain did not function where it was needed most.

"All hands who were available came aft to fight the fire. The glow undoubtedly showed clearly through the open elevator well and attracted a second enemy plane which came in vertically from directly overhead and struck the flight deck just forward of the elevator well. This killed all of the fire-fighting party . . .

"The second explosion buckled bulkheads and collapsed decks, dumping quantities of ammunition into the fire. The fuel in the refugee planes that had been brought below without being degassed went up with a roar."

Twenty-five minutes of gutting blast and flame convinced Captain Pratt he would have to abandon ship. Life rafts were thrown into the water and the frog-throated bull horns on the flight deck bellowed out orders to break out all rubber life rafts from the planes parked on deck. Calmly the men slid down lines into the dark waters, as if they had rehearsed for tragedy all their lives.

One lookout on the searchlight platform 80 feet above the sea decided that the long climb down to the flaming flight deck was too slow. He climbed up on the rail of the platform, paused for a second, and took his departure in a perfect swan dive.

Just as the last man, the captain, slid into the water a final internal explosion blew off the ship's stern.

The water that night was rough and cold, and many men drowned.

Some had been stunned or helplessly injured by fragments of the ship that showered down on them. Some had become panicky in the dark, rough seas and exhausted themselves. The survivors grouped themselves together in clusters knowing they could thus be spotted more easily by the rescuing escort vessels.

Captain Pratt and the Assistant Navigator, Ensign William G. Blake, swam about, calming the men and encouraging them.

"We found one chap," recalled Captain Pratt, "who was having great difficulty and the two of us talked to him until he had completely recovered himself. When he saw a destroyer come near, he struck out without difficulty and in doing so kicked me in the side. This didn't hurt me at all but he looked back and said, 'Oh, I beg your pardon,' and then he recognized me. 'Oh, my God,' he said, 'it's the Captain.'"

Forty-five minutes after abandoning ship, Captain Pratt was hauled aboard the destroyer escort EDMONDS (Lieutenant Commander John S. Burrows, Jr.) and reported to Admiral Durgin, commander of the group, by voice radio, and then took charge of the rescue work. Lifesaving operations were difficult enough in the rough water, lit only by the fires on the sinking carrier, but by that same light Jap planes returned to strafe men in the water. One raft, containing most of the quartermasters, was hit. They were never seen again.

13

Mount Suribachi had become a symbol to all men fighting for Iwo. It had been given the almost unimaginative code name "Hot Rocks," but with bitter irony the Marines had another name for it. Heavy fire from the Japanese who were dug into the side of Suribachi had caused havoc on the exposed landing beaches. Bombardment ships had pumped salvo after salvo into the crumbling crags and dented defiles of the dormant volcano—in fact one ship, the destroyer minesweep T. E. FRASER (Commander Ronald J. Woodaman) emptied itself of bullets 12 times—but still the Japanese came back to their guns, still they kept up their incessant rain of death.

That is why the Marines dubbed the mountain fortress "Mount Plasma."

Before all attention could be turned to the northern, and most heavily fortified, part of Iwo, Hot Rocks had to be mopped up. That task fell to

the 28th Regiment of the 5th Marines. On D-day they had thrown a noose around the base of the mountain and had begun the slow, hard task of strangulation and annihilation. Inching forward, cave by cave, the Marines fought with flame throwers and demolition charges.

On the morning of D-plus-4, February 23, it was decided to rush the top of Suribachi. The task was assigned to a 40-man patrol led by First Lieutenant Harold G. Shrier, one of Carlson's old Raiders. Shrier carried a small flag in his pack.

In the patrol was a Navy man, Pharmacist's Mate 2/c John H. Bradley, attached to the 28th Marine Regiment.

"We started up the mountain," Bradley recalled, "immediately after the naval barrage and plane strafing was over and we reached the top. I might add that the reason we got there without a single enemy shot being fired was because the Japs were still in their caves, waiting for the bombardment to be lifted.

"The minute we reached the rim of Suribachi, we set up our line of fire. Lieutenant Shrier placed the machine guns where he wanted them, spotted our riflemen, and immediately sent patrols out right and left.

"Mount Suribachi is the highest point on Iwo, and is hollow on top with a 20-foot wide ledge that goes all the way around the crater. This crater is about 50 or 60 feet deep and in it the Japs were dug in all around."

Lieutenant Shrier handed his flag to Platoon Sergeant Ernest I. Thomas (later killed), who promptly raised it on an improvised staff. But it was a small flag and couldn't be seen from the base of the mountain, where one battalion of Marines was engaged in a hot scrap with the Japanese. So Lieutenant Colonel Chandler W. Johnson, the battalion commander, sent a 4-man patrol up to the summit with a larger flag.

"On top," continued Bradley, "we looked around for something we could put this larger flag on. The Japs had some old pipes lying around there which they used to run water down the mountain. We used this pipe as a staff, and after attaching the American flag to it, we put it up. Joe Rosenthal happened to be there—he came up a little while after we were on top and he took his picture which is now famous.

"I'm the one that's second from the right as you're looking at the picture. And right next to me there you can see a man's helmet sticking up, that's Pfc. Gagnon. The man bending over nearest to the ground is Sergeant Hansen, who was killed some days later. And the one in back of

me with the rifle slung on his shoulder is Pfc. Ira Hayes. He is also a survivor. The one in back of Hayes is Pfc. Sousley, who was later killed in action on the north end. There are two men you can hardly see in the picture. The one on the right hand side is Pfc. Rene Gagnon, who is a survivor, and the other one in back of Gagnon is Sergeant Strank, who was killed in action later on the north end of Iwo."

Thus at 1035 on the morning of February 23, 1945, the American flag was raised over Iwo Jima.

Ahead there was tough and bloody fighting but the symbol of victory had gone up over the smoldering island in full view, where it could be seen by all. The ships off the beaches saw it and ringing cheers went up from their crews; the grimy, bearded Marines slashing their way through the arid wasteland of rock and sand saw it and knew that victory was only a matter of time—and lives; Lieutenant General Kuribayashi and his tenacious little soldiers saw it too, and once again they vowed, by all that was holy to the Samurai, to die dearly.

"We were very discouraged," wrote Horie, "when we heard of the fall of Mt. Suribachi after only three days' fighting. When I received the telegram at Chichi Jima from Iwo Jima that District Commander of Mt. Suribachi informed to Lieutenant General Kuribayashi by wire saying 'Enemy's bombardments from air and sea and their assaults with explosions are very fierce and if we ever try to stay and defend our present positions it will lead us to self-destruction. We should rather like to go out of our position and choose death by banzai charges.' I was bursted with emotion.

"I knew the fall of the 1st airfield, but I never thought of losing Mt. Suribachi in only three days . . .

"Lieutenant General Kuribayashi informed to Tokyo by wire as follows: 'I am not afraid of the fighting power of only three American Marine Divisions if there are no bombardment from aircraft and war ships. This is the only reason why we have to see such miserable situations.

"Lieutenant General Kuribayashi was usually at his commanding place in the cave. As soon as his staff officers made telegrams with the information which came into their hands from time to time from each troops, he inspected, revised and ordered to dispatch them. As he was very skillful in making compositions, so his telegrams let all Japanese weep in those days."

The Marines ground forward crushing the Japanese with their bullets

with their flames, and with their bodies; as Holland Smith has said there was only one way to do the job—frontal attack.

By D-plus-5 the 3rd Marine Division, the Reserve Expeditionary Troops, had been committed and had taken over the line between the 5th Marines on the left and the 4th Marines on the right. From their position in the center along the high ground the 3rd Marines were able to support the other two divisions who had to advance through the more difficult terrain that sloped to the sea on either flank. By now all three division commanders as well as General Schmidt, the corps commander, had their command posts ashore.

The Japanese had their main defense positions in the vicinity of Airfield No. 2. Here the Japs had mutually supporting, heavy underground concrete blockhouses, bunkers, pillboxes, reinforced caves—all organized in depth. As many as a thousand of these installations were reduced in one 800-yard area. Open ground was strewn with land mines and artillery; enemy mortar and rocket batteries were registered in on all approaches.

For the Japanese there was no retreat, no withdrawal. They stayed in their fortified positions, unexposed, and fought until they were killed. In the initial stages of the attack, during darkness, the Japanese probed at the Marines in considerable strength, but, as the attack progressed, they sat solidly behind their steel and concrete and waited to kill Marines. And Kuribayashi's web worked well, for the Marines were suffering over a thousand casualties a day.

The 4th Marines on the right flank found their sector almost impassable. Their gains were limited to 1,500 yards in 25 days. But after the main defense position near Airfield No. 2 was breached, the 5th Marines on the left flank started accelerating, making the general advance a wheeling movement pivoted on the extreme right.

"There were no rear areas," remarked Lieutenant George F. Tittman, chaplain on the transport *FAYETTE*. "Everyone was under fire all the time."

14

Attack transports have a habit of turning up at any and all invasions. The *FREDERICK FUNSTON* was no exception.

"Twenty days after leaving Luzon," said Quartermaster 1/c John J.

Dreyfors, "I was on the beachhead at Iwo. I was fed up with it, but they kept saying that they needed experienced personnel. What the hell, I told them, I wasn't experienced either when I went into Saipan.

"I was the quartermaster of the FREDERICK FUNSTON's Beach Battalion. There were 48 of us in our Beach Party Platoon. We were in on five invasions—Saipan, Guam, Leyte, Luzon, and Iwo—but only five of us were killed. Our sister ship O'HARA had more casualties, however.

"We had the 4th Reconnaissance Marines aboard FUNSTON. For a week after the invasion began we lay off Iwo, over the horizon, and the Marines on deck listened to the fighting with their portable radios. It was evident that it was pretty rough going. 'None of this for us,' they would say.

"When our Beach Party got ashore—on D-plus-7—we didn't look like swabbies; we looked like Marines. Our job was handling all communications from the beach to the ships. We told them what the beach conditions were like, how much surf there was (that was my job, reporting on the surf and tide), what the casualties were, and we relayed all our supply and ammunition needs. We worked a lot on Iwo with the Marine Engineers.

"The captain of our ship was Chaptain Charles C. Anderson, known to his men as 'Chippin' Charlie.' His son Charles Jr. was a sergeant with the Marine Scouts and Snipers. He had enlisted in the Marines after completing his first year at Georgetown University. He had been wounded at Saipan, and when we were in Pearl, he came aboard to eat with his father. When we arrived at Iwo, the son saw the ship and came out to see his father. While aboard, he wrote a letter to his mother. Then a couple of days later he was brought back to the ship. Both his legs and one of his arms were shattered. He must have exploded a mine. His father watched while the surgeon operated. The son was conscious but was so badly wounded that he didn't feel it. In fact he would joke about it: 'What will the girls think of me in this shape?' Once he asked his father: 'Sir, I wonder how mother is going to take all this?' Sixteen hours later he died in his father's arms."

Captain Anderson, after certifying the death in the records of the ship, helped carry his son ashore to the 4th Marine Division Cemetery at the foot of Hot Rocks. When he returned to the ship, he carried his son's burial flag.

"We retired from the area," continued Dreyfors, "on D-plus-14. I had the wheel on the bridge. As we pulled away the skipper kept looking back at the island, where his son was."

15

By the end of February artillery spotter planes were using No. 1 Airfield, although it was still occasionally subjected to artillery fire. By March 2, the runway had been stretched to 4,000 feet by the Seabees. Two days later a crippled B-29 made a landing and was refueled with gasoline carried in the helmets of Marines.

The fighting continued fierce and bloody, but by March 13 the Japanese had been pressed into a pocket at the extreme northern tip of the island, Kitano Point. For three days the entire strength of the Marine divisions was thrown against the rocky, rugged gulches and crags that backed up to the pounding breakers of the sea.

Organized resistance was declared at an end as of 1800 hours, March 16, and the Marines started re-embarking after 26 days of combat.

But Kuribayashi was not yet dead. Horie writes: "Lieutenant General Kuribayashi commanded his battle under the candle lights without having a single rest nor sleep day after day. Radio broadcasts, newspapers and magazines of Japan encouraged him thoroughly. Especially old and young men, boys and girls of his native place, prayed God for his victory.

"On 14th of March 'Song of Iwo Jima,' composed by the fighting men of Iwo Jima before the American forces landed, was broadcast to Lieutenant General Kuribayashi, officers and men from Tokyo, and he sent his thankful message to all Japanese.

"On 15th of March he informed Tokyo by wire as follows: 'I determined to go out and make banzai charges against the enemy at midnight of the 17th. Now I say goodbye to all senior and friend officers everlastingly.'

"And he added three farewell songs in this telegram. From the morning of the 17th we were unable to communicate with him, and we thought that the 17th of March was his death day.

"He was promoted to General on the 17th. But we were greatly surprised when we received his telegram suddenly on 21st morning. We knew from this telegram that he and his men (Army and Navy all together 400 men) went out on the midnight of the 17th and shut them-

selves in the cave 150 meters northwest from his old cave. He also said 'The enemy's front line is 200 or 300 meters from us, and they are attacking by tank-firing. They advise us to surrender by a loud-speaker, but we only laughed at this childish trick and did not set ourselves against them.'

"He sent the last following telegram to us: 'We have not eaten nor drank for 5 days. But our fighting spirit is still running high. We are going to fight bravely until the last.'

"I did my best at Chichi Jima to send him the telegram of his promotion to General on the 17th of March. On the evening of the 23rd one radio operator informed me by wire 'All officers and men of Chichi Jima, Goodbye,' from Iwo. I tried to communicate with them for three days after that but finally I did not get their answer."

Ten days after the island was declared secured an unidentified Japanese officer gathered together, from the shattered, crumbling underground ruins of the island, a group of 200 survivors and threw a vicious night attack at the unsuspecting Americans in the bivouac areas. Many pilots and crewmen of the 7th Fighter Command, engineers and troops of service and construction battalions were slain in their sleep before the vicious postscript to the great Battle for Iwo was brought to a bloody end.

Japanese resistance had been to the death. Only 212 prisoners, a quarter of them Korean, had been taken; 13,234 enemy bodies were counted and buried, and an estimated 8,070 more were sealed in caves or buried by the Japanese themselves.

Marine casualties, too, had been horribly high. Often companies and battalions, deprived of leaders and key personnel, had fought with less than 50 per cent strength. Total casualties among the troops were 20,845 (283 of these were of the Army Garrison Force) with 4,891 killed and missing. Supporting the operation, the Navy had suffered 1,237 casualties.

Was it worth it? Was the price too high? The final issue of the magazine *Impact*, had this to say: "From 4 March, when the first crippled B-29 landed there, to the end of the war, 2251 Superforts landed at Iwo. A large number of these would have been lost if Iwo had not been available. Each of the B-29s carried 11 crewmen, a total of 24,761 men. It cost 22,082 casualties to take the island, a terrific price for the Navy and Marines to pay, but one for which every man who served the 20th Air Force and VII Fighter Command is eternally grateful."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Into the Tiger's Den

I

ON FEBRUARY 10, 1945, the largest carrier task force that had ever put to sea sortied from Ulithi. It was Task Force 58, the long arm of the Fifth Fleet. Included were 11 carriers, 5 light carriers, 8 fast battleships, 1 battle cruiser, 5 heavy cruisers, 11 light cruisers, 81 destroyers, and over 1,200 aircraft. War-born, this muscular fleet had been spawned, nurtured, and matured after Pearl Harbor. Only four of its ships had been with the fleet when the Japs touched off the Pacific War.

By changing drivers in mid-lagoon after the triumphant sweep of the China Sea, the Third Fleet again became the Fifth Fleet, and Task Force 38 again became Task Force 58. The quiet, calculating team of Spruance and Mitscher, which had begun the march across the Central Pacific, replaced the newer combination of Halsey and McCain, who had been smashing almost continuously at the Japs since the Battle for Leyte Gulf.

For the most part, after the top-level shift of command, it was a matter of same ships, different fleet. "They change the drivers but keep the same horses," as one man put it. But much new steel and many new guns had been added. The carriers BENNINGTON (Captain James B. Sykes) and RANDOLPH (Captain Felix Baker) were getting their first taste of combat operations; the 17-year-old SARATOGA had returned to the fleet after a long absence; the new battleship MISSOURI, her role in history already being shaped by fate and politics, reported for the first time; the ALASKA (Captain Kenneth H. Noble), half battleship, half cruiser, joined up. Also for the first time two carriers, SARATOGA and ENTERPRISE, were to be used in night operations in a separate task group.

Scuttlbutt crisscrossed Ulithi Lagoon in crazy, elaborate patterns: from ship to ship, from signalman to boat coxswain, from ship's officers to fliers, from buddy to buddy. Argued with thickened tongues across the bar at Mog Mog, blinked by flashing light from bridge to bridge,

whispered secretly in the wardroom, speculated on at great length on the fantail—it was always the same topic: Where would the carriers strike next? There were many answers.

"I think it'll be China this time," remarked a bosun's mate as he coiled a line.

"Probably Okinawa again," predicted a grease-smeared gunner.

"How about that, 'Wheels'?" queried a young seaman. "You guys on the bridge get cut in on all the hot dope."

But the quartermaster only smiled and took a drag on his cigarette.

"I don't give a damn where it is," commented an aerologist's mate, "I just hope we stay clear of those typhoons."

Everyone knew that something big was brewing. When fleet commanders relieve one another, don't they always have big rolls of plans stuck under their arms? Didn't Spruance, whose flagship INDIANAPOLIS was riding at anchor in the lagoon when the Third Fleet returned from the January strikes, relieve Halsey the very next day after the fleet's return? Didn't Mitscher, fresh from his Stateside leave, look as if he was ready to go after Japs again?

For nearly two weeks two task groups were placed on 24-hour notice while Service Squadron 10 labored to ready the fleet.

Then, at dawn on February 10, the whole lagoon began to stir. Ship after ship quietly weighed anchor and eased toward the channel that led to the open sea. Hour after hour, well into the afternoon, the long columns of ships filed out. Task Force 58 with its five carrier groups was on the move. It bore little resemblance to the task force that had attacked Tarawa over a year before; there were only six carriers then.

At last the great secret could be told. Aboard one of the carriers—and the scene was repeated on all the ships—the captain called all his officers together in the wardroom.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it gives me great pleasure to announce that you will be the first to strike Tokyo!"

There was a profound silence. One could hear the proverbial pin drop. Then from the back of the room rose some scattered cheers.

Tokyo! Good God, it was the heart of the empire, the focal point of the whole Pacific War, the ultimate goal of all effort!

Later in the day the public-address system began to hum throughout the ship, then a couple of experimental blows into the microphone

"Attention all hands. This is the Captain speaking. Our target is Tokyo. At dawn on the sixteenth we will strike . . ."

It was a sober crew that received the news.

Books have been written and stories told of eager warriors shouting for battle, straining to attack. But that is mostly fiction. It is much nearer the truth to admit that the men were—well, a bit apprehensive. Chest-beating bravado is one thing, but intelligent realization of the closeness of death is another. Tokyo could strike back at the fleet with all the fury and all the strength of a wounded tiger. Her fliers, in mass, were dedicating their lives to the defense of the hopeless cause.

On many of the ships over fifty per cent of the crew were green hands who listened wide-eyed to the older men as they told tales of the Kamikazes.

"The Kamikaze boys will go after the big flat-tops, first," remarked a veteran bosun's mate on one of the light carriers.

"Yeah, but what happens after there're no big ones left?" questioned an unsoothed listener.

2

The fleet set a course to the eastward of the Marianas.

The plan of attack, with typical Spruance thoroughness, had been previously worked out down to the most minute detail. On the day that the bombardment ships began the softening of Iwo for invasion, the carrier plans would strike hard at air installations in the Toyko area—reported as 20 important airfields and depots and three times that number of lesser fields—to cut off air reinforcements to the island at the source. This would continue for two or three days depending on the weather, then the whole task force would shift to Iwo to support the invasion. Then attention was to be again turned toward the Home Islands with a strike on the Kobe-Nagoya area and a photographic "strike" on Okinawa, whose invasion was scheduled for April Fool's Day. This was quite a hunk of fighting to bite off, but Spruance was sure he could chew it.

"The fleet would be in a very dangerous position, hovering off the coast of Japan," remarked Spruance later, "but I felt if we couldn't take it then, we couldn't take it later when transports were unloading troops on Okinawa."

As the ships steamed northeast under a cloudless blue sky there was

not much relaxation. Knowing that they were on the road to Toyko, all hands were only too glad to participate in the training exercises that they usually cursed so roundly. Targets were towed by aircraft past the ships and eager gunners poked tracers at the silk sleeves with an energy born of the knowledge that in a few days that innocuous spawn of the silkworm might be replaced by charging Kamikaze. Carrier planes made simulated attacks on the fleet. Antiaircraft practice was held while ships were fueling. Every other day the destroyers came alongside a big sister to "top off," for one could never tell when the weather would rough up and fueling would be impossible. As one little destroyer, bouncing and rolling as usual, came alongside a battleship, one of the destroyer deckhands yelled over to his counterpart on the battleship: "Hey, Mac, how do ya' like shore duty?"

At Tinian in the Marianas the force held an Iwo dress rehearsal with the amphibious forces being assembled there. Carrier planes zoomed low over beaches simulating prelanding air support. Admiral Spruance on INDIANAPOLIS (Captain Charles B. McVay, III) headed into Guam, where he held a final conference with his amphibious commanders, for, since Toyko called, he would not see them again until the invasion was underway.

3

To get within striking range of the Japanese capital without being detected, it would be necessary to sweep aside the small picket boats that were known to ring the Home Islands, but Spruance had good interference running in front of him—B-29s, Marianas-based naval search planes, submarines, and, of course, the carrier air patrols.

On February 15, the day before the strikes, to make doubly sure of catching all prying Japanese boats, an advanced destroyer screen, consisting of 15 destroyers under Captain Harry B. Jarrett, took position 35 miles in front of the leading task group. At about nine in the morning a carrier patrol plane made contact with a lonely picket and started strafing. The HAILEY was ordered over to finish the job. One cold, frightened survivor was picked up and transferred to YORKTOWN, Admiral Arthur Radford's flagship.

That afternoon another kill was made. A fighter from YORKTOWN, on antisubmarine patrol, shot down a nosy Betty—"big-butt Betty," as the

sailors dubbed the enemy flying boats—25 miles from the task group, before she discovered the carriers.

The course of the fleet was now northwest, spearing directly for Tokyo. The seas were gray and rough. The smaller ships dipped into the huge swells, almost disappeared from view, and then came struggling up the next crest. Cold, stinging spray lashed at men and metal. Soon a dismal rain started to drizzle. Low, gray clouds pressed down over the whole sea.

Lookouts shivered as the damp, cold wind bit through their thin clothing. The Pacific War was not supposed to be like this—this was North Atlantic stuff. Ulithi with its coconuts and warm sands became a faraway dream as men beat their arms and feet were tramped vigorously on decks. Many had no winter clothing, no sweaters, and a semiwarmth was maintained only by piling on several shirts and pants and, of course, constant recourse to the Navy's traditionally powerful and inexhaustible hot coffee.

"Ha, you laughed at me back at Mog Mog when I got this sweater from my girl," said one vindictive individual to his blue-nosed companions, displaying a confection of pink wool under his blouse.

The weather grew worse. Preoccupied acrologists bent over their charts piecing together reports from China, from the Philippines, from Guam, from submarines, and even straggling reports from Russia. Fronts were plotted, movements predicted. One great question hung as heavily as the clouds overhead: Would the Tokyo targets be closed in?

Throughout the black, starless night the distance to Tokyo continued to shrink—250 miles, 200 miles, 175 miles. The task force was now making the high-speed run. Radars turned slowly, methodically sweeping sea and sky for any signs of movement—enemy movement. But there was nothing. Evidently the Jap in his homeland felt snug and protected by the cold, surly seas. Eyes on the blacked-out bridge strained hard into the darkness—but there was nothing. No bogeys, no skunks.

Below decks some men slept, others wrote letters, some played card games, some sang, others just sat smoking. Aboard the carriers red-helmeted ordnancemen loaded the parked planes with bombs and rockets and machine-gun belts. Mechanics poked and adjusted; radiomen tuned and tinkered. If these men got three hours' sleep they were lucky.

Pilots read the memorandum from Mitscher that had been posted in the ready room: "The coming raid on Tokyo will produce the greatest

air victory of the war for carrier aviation, but only if every air group commander, squadron commander, combat team leader, section leader and individual pilot abides by the fundamental rules of air combat that have been taught to him since the war started—"Those of us who can't be over the target with you will be doing all we can to get you back safely—" And every pilot, remembering the Battle of the Philippine Sea, knew that Mitscher meant just that.

In the darkness of early morning the ships sounded general quarters. The planes on the carriers stood ready, like birds sleeping on a roost with wings folded into their bodies. Then from the ready room, where they had been given their last-minute briefing, came the fighter pilots in their weird "zoomie" suits bulging at the shins and flapping on the back.

The voice of the Air Officer flooded over the flight deck: "Time check! Time check! On the mark it will be 6:32 . . . Stand by . . . Mark!" Watches had to be carefully synchronized, movements perfectly timed.

A cold wind whipped over the deck numbing the hands of mechanics making last-minute adjustments.

"Stand by to start engines . . . Stand clear of propellers . . . *Start engines.*"

With a cough, a pop, a slight stutter, and then a ripping roar the engines caught, spitting blue flame from exhausts. The sleeping birds had come to life.

A plane director, scarcely discernible in the darkness except for the tiny dim light in the palm of each hand, signaled the first plane to unlock its wings. A dozen plane handlers leaped to push the wings forward and lock them in flying position. Directed by the glowing, waving lights plane after plane spread its wings and taxied up the dark flight deck toward the two catapults.

The TBS speaker on the bridge sputtered, hummed, and then spoke—orders from task group commander: "All ships. Stand by to turn into the wind . . ."

And five minutes later: "Execute!"

Like co-ordinated parts of one huge machine the carriers started their turns, wide and sweeping.

When the big ships had come halfway into the wind, the Captain turned to the Air Officer and gave a simple order: "Launch planes."

On the deck below the bridge a dim light was waved down abruptly,

a sharp crack, and the first fighter catapulted down the deck and leaped into the darkness. Half a dozen more planes quickly took their places on the catapults and were in the air by the time the carrier had settled down on its course into the wind. Then the remaining fighters started running the length of the flight deck and taking to the air without benefit of the extra push. Soon the sky was filled with orbiting planes that joined together and headed for Tokyo, 120 miles away.

4

It was a memorable day, February 16. Exactly one year before, the same team of Spruance and Mitscher with Task Force 58 had for the first time attacked the feared, fabulous fortress of Truk. Now they were throwing the first carrier plane attack against Tokyo. In spite of the amazing coincidence of dates it has been fairly well established that neither of the two admirals had an official astrologer attached to his staff.

With the fighters launched, the men on the carriers waited grimly at their battle stations expecting attack. Some had smeared their faces with blue antishock cream, all wore gloves, eyeshields and helmets. It was the beginning of a long, cold vigil.

In the communications room radiomen adjusted their receivers to the fineness of a hair. Several were listening to the nearby Japanese stations that were blissfully transmitting routine traffic. Suddenly the airways were filled with excited Japanese chattering and then, silence. Smiling, the communications officer reported this to the captain—evidently the Japs had been caught before they had their morning cup of tea.

As always the immediate object of this quick hard fighter thrust was to chew up Jap fighter opposition—either in the air or preferably on the ground—so that the succeeding bomber strikes could go in with relative immunity. Since there were so many airfields in the area the technique of “blanketing” the fields as had been done in the Philippines could not be used, so only the big, most menacing airfields could be hit. Fighters fanned out over the Tokyo plain and north and south along the coast, each task group being assigned a different area. Admiral Sherman's Task Group 58.3—ESSEX (Captain Carlos W. Wieber), BUNKER HILL (Captain George A. Seitz), COWPENS (Captain George H. DeBaum)—had been given the inland area northwest of Tokyo but there was a solid overcast

down to the very ground, so the fighters circled back to the coast to loose their bullets. Admiral Davison's Task Group 58.2—*LEXINGTON* (Captain Thomas H. Robbins, Jr.), *HANCOCK* (Captain Robert F. Hickey), *SAN JACINTO* (Captain Michael H. Kernodle)—pounced upon Chiba Peninsula, the thumb of land that lies between Tokyo and the sea. Admiral Clark's 58.1—*HORNET* (Captain Austin K. Doyle), *WASP* (Captain Oscar A. Weller), *BENNINGTON* (Captain James B. Sykes), *BELLEAU WOOD* (Captain William G. Tomlinson)—branched westward toward Hamamatsu, hit at the Yokohama area, and even took care of Hachijo Shima, a small island 125 miles to the south of Honshu. Admiral Radford's 58.4—*YORKTOWN* (Captain Thomas S. Combs), *RANDOLPH* (Captain Felix Baker), *CABOT* (Captain William W. Smith), *LANGLEY* (Captain John F. Wegforth)—covered the fields to the northeast.

The most intense fighting developed over the Chiba Peninsula. A solid ceiling, seldom higher than 1,000 feet, extended from the task force to within 10 or 20 miles of the coast, but over Chiba Peninsula the weather was fair and the ceiling high. The first sweep of 40 fighters from TG 58.2 ran into a group of 100 Japanese fighters over the northeast coast of the peninsula and shot down fourscore. It was over this area that Fighting 80 flying from *HANCOCK* knocked down 71 Nip planes, thus surpassing the previous record set by *LEXINGTON* during the "Marianas Turkey Shoot" the year before.

"The sweeps ran into so many airborne Jap planes," reported Lieutenant Commander Albert O. Vorse, Commander of Air Group 80, "that attacks on grounded aircraft and airfields became of secondary importance. This was a welcome change after the previous months of relatively fruitless hunting in Luzon and Formosa."

5

On that first day the fighter aircraft carried the brunt of attack over Honshu, blunt-nosed Hellcats and gull-winged Corsairs (four of the carriers—*ESSEX*, *BUNKER HILL*, *WASP*, *BENNINGTON*—carried Marine as well as naval air groups). Each carrier group sent in five fighter sweeps and one or two bomber strikes. Bombers from *LEXINGTON*, *BUNKER HILL*, and *SAN JACINTO* singled out the Ota air-frame plant north of Tokyo and completed work that had been started a week before by B-29s.

The sweeps were not without their comic reliefs. One fighter, skimming

the ground at treetop level, spotted a lone Jap unconcernedly riding his bicycle down a country road. This wag of aviator zoomed low over the startled cyclist and almost blew him out of his pants with the slipstream from his prop.

In the ready room of ENTERPRISE just after an attack, someone remarked that it seemed rather cold; did anyone else notice it? A young pilot, just returned, piped up: "I don't know about the temperature, but this trembling I'm doing ain't from patriotism!"

One of the flights that went in that morning from LEXINGTON was led by the Commander of Air Group 9, Commander Phil Torrey. Exactly one year before, Torrey had led his group against Truk, which had turned out to be much less formidable than expected. Now Tokyo, another trail blazer. Would it be the same? Torrey wondered, and hoped.

Torrey and eleven other fighters were launched from the deck of LEXINGTON at 1045. After orbiting the ship they rendezvoused at 2,000 feet with twelve more fighters from HANCOCK and eight from SAN JACINTO and headed for Imba airfield in the Tokyo Bay area.

Over the field Torrey led his group in a couple of runs back and forth to get the lay of the land before he ordered the strafing and rocket attack. Just as he nosed over to lead his Hellcats in, three "Tallyhos" rang through the air—enemy fighters!

Torrey leveled off and began a defensive weave. There followed a 40-minute mix-up in which eight Japs were sent flaming to the earth. All the Hellcats became widely scattered.

Wingmen, however, always try to stick with their partners, and Lieutenant (jg) Don Kent stuck close to Torrey. He later told how, at the end of the general melee, a dark brown-green Tojo came charging head-on for Torrey. Both planes spit angrily, and at the last minute the Jap peeled off smoking. Suddenly Torrey's plane began a series of dives and steep climbs, and then abruptly plunged to earth, a dead man at the controls. Torrey, as well as the Jap had been mortally wounded in the vicious head-on charge.

Weather, for the most part, was accurately, if inelegantly, described as "lousy." Many of the planes could not reach their inland targets.

Often the airfields had to be attacked from altitudes so low that effective runs could not be made.

Weather was not solely a hindrance, however. It shielded the carriers from the snooping Japanese and also enabled the attackers to achieve

what in military parlance is known as "complete tactical surprise." But in spite of this over 700 interceptors rose to the defense of the Tokyo plain. The carrier planes knocked 281 of these from the gray skies and chewed up over 200 more on the fields while losing only 24 of their own planes—less than 10 per cent of Nip losses.

A final "zipper" sweep was carried out by night fighters from SARATOGA and ENTERPRISE against the principal fields in the Tokyo area and as far west as Hamamatsu in order to dissuade the face-fallen Nip from launching vengeful dusk attacks against the carriers. It was the end of the biggest day in the history of the Fast Carrier Force.

The Jap was being challenged, not in his back yard, but squarely in the middle of his front living room.

6

The next morning the fighter sweeps were begun again, but the weather had grown worse. Flying conditions, as the aerologists said, were "undesirable to bad." Low black clouds rolled over the gray sea. Heavy rain squalls lashed across the flight decks and curtains of mist opened and closed about the ships. Occasionally the rain hardened into sleet or turned into a white flurry of snow. Aboard LEXINGTON wide-eyed seamen shook their heads in wonder at the small flakes of snow that clung to their clothing. A week ago they had cursed the tropical heat of Ulithi!

The main emphasis on the morning of the 17th was shifted from the airfields to the aircraft and aero engine factories that lay to the northwest on the outskirts of Tokyo. Over two hundred planes, half of them bombers, went in to dig at the roots of Jap air power.

Lieutenant Commander Edward H. Bayers flying from YORKTOWN said that his flight to the Tachikawa Engine Plant, 20 miles west of Tokyo, was "the roughest ride I ever hope to take."

Enemy fighters started snapping at them from the time they crossed the coast line. The Japanese did not attack the strong weaving American formations in concentrated force. Instead they tried to suck individual fighters out of formation by closing singly and then turning away, offering themselves as very juicy bait. If an overeager fighter took the bait, waiting planes would leap down from higher altitudes to devour the wanderer. But when that trick failed to break up the formation the Japs concentrated on the leading divisions, trying to nudge the flight toward the AA areas

over Tokyo. It was a hard, swirling scrap from the coast to the target and out again.

The enemy's pockets were filled with Oriental tricks. One tried to shake off a Hellcat by jettisoning a dummy parachute. But when the Jap pulled out of his dive, the Hellcat was still on his tail, and there he stayed until the Jap fell flaming from the sky.

The Tama-Musashino aircraft engine plant, one of the most important in the empire, 8 miles northwest of Tokyo, was attacked by planes from ESSEX, BUNKER HILL, and COWPENS, "Ted" Sherman's task group, after they had skirted a pocket of particularly bad weather.

Airfields, some of which had been covered during the night by snow, again came in for their share of smothering. Typical of the sweeps was one made by a group from YORKTOWN and RANDOLPH with Lieutenant Richard M. Deavitt led against powerful Konoike airfield northeast of Tokyo. The RANDOLPH group stayed on top while YORKTOWN boys pushed over and with rockets and tracers converted fuel tanks, hangars, and parked planes into fuel for fires whose oily smoke rose thousands of feet in the air. The Japanese aviators, for some obscure reason, did nothing much to interfere with the demolition but instead attacked the watchdogs from the RANDOLPH. So the YORKTOWN fliers dashed to help their buddies in, as snarled and confused a dogfight as any back-alley canine mix-up. In a matter of minutes the enemy lost a third of their eighteen aircraft, so the survivors went inland—fast.

Shipping was not a primary target during these strikes but occasionally small vessels—pickets, fishing boats, coastal steamers, and the like—were strafed. On the 17th, however, a target too tempting to resist was found in Yokohama harbor: an escort carrier, the only kind of carrier the Japs had left by this stage of the war. Bombs plus a hail of rockets rolled it over, flaming violently.

7

One of the aviators assigned to fly fighter protection for a bombing strike on the Tachikawa aircraft engine plant was Ensign Louis A. Menard, Jr. One year before Menard had flown in the quick, hard raid against Truk, where he had shot down four Japs.

"We went in in a stairway formation, stacked to the rear, with the fighters weaving above," Menard relates. "I was next to the top at about

22,000 or 24,000 feet. That seems high, but the Japs came in on us even higher.

"The bombers went in on our target first and left it smoking. Then El Grupo—that's the Group Commander—said 'Everybody dive, let go in salvo, and let's go home.' At about 15,000 I was vertical. I let go the salvo and pulled out at about 6,000. It was right over a naval base right at Tokyo and a lot of AA was coming up. A 40mm shell hit me in the right wing and I went into a spin.

"I pulled out at about 2,000 feet. My starboard aileron had been hit. After some experimenting I found that my critical speed was 160 knots—at that speed the damaged aileron went smooth and I was able to fly OK. By this time my group had shoved off, so I headed out to sea, beyond the sub nets across the entrance to Tokyo Bay.

"I pulled out my chart board and tried to collect my senses. I could pick up a slight signal on my homing device, so I took a 50-degree turn and headed for it. The signal kept getting louder and louder. Finally I picked up a lone destroyer. It was the best-looking ship I ever saw. I headed in the direction I thought the task group would be and soon sighted the carriers.

"I was at about 3,000 feet then. The weather was pretty good, spotty with some sunshine coming through. I started thinking about how I should bail out, for I couldn't land on a carrier in my shot-up condition. And I couldn't roll over and fall out because of my aileron. I decided to climb out of the cockpit and jump, but when I tried to roll the canopy back, it stuck. A bit of jagged metal from a hit wedged it shut. That was the first time I saw that my tail had been hit too.

"Then I thought I would pull the pins out of the canopy, push it up a bit, and let the wind catch it and tear it off. But the pins were rusty and my fingers were cold. Finally I got the left one out, but the right one stayed stuck and the canopy wouldn't break off.

"I got kinda nervous then, so I took a drink of water and tried to collect my wits. Finally after much tugging and pushing I got the canopy off but when I did it pulled a wire cable across the cockpit, pinning me down. I started hacking away with my knife, the only tool I had. I chipped enough of the cable away so that it parted, but it sure ruined the knife.

"Then I climbed out and dived for the trailing edge of the wing, pulled the chute and blossomed up.

"Now each pilot has his own harness which he buckles on the chute and the life raft in the plane. I'm a little guy and had to have a cushion to sit on too. This had been tacked on to my risers so, when I jumped, I wondered whether I would be able to wiggle free of the harness when I hit the water.

"While I was thinking about all this, I hit. Sure enough, I couldn't get free—and the chute wouldn't collapse. My knife was in the plane. I couldn't inflate my life jacket because the harness was too tight.

"The chute started to drag me along the water. The waves were pretty big. I would blow through one, then skip along in the trough and then be dragged through another wave. I tried to breathe while I was in the valley, and hold my breath while going through the waves. The water was cold at first, but pretty soon I didn't notice that any more. Then things got dimmer and dimmer, and finally I blacked out."

All this while the destroyer *TAUSSIG* prepared for rescue. It was an old story to her. Just the day before one of her swimmers, Seaman 1/c Frank H. Applegate, had dived into the cold rough water, swum 200 yards, and secured a line about a downed *HORNET* pilot, who had then been pulled aboard the destroyer to fight another day. Now Applegate and another swimmer stood on the fantail, greased and with flippers on their feet, ready for another rescue.

On the bridge the skipper, Commander Josephus A. Robbins, guided his ship toward the spot where the parachute would hit, making for a point upwind. But then the freakish thing happened, and, instead of collapsing, the parachute went galloping downwind at about 5 or 10 knots dragging the struggling pilot along with it.

Robbins, a veteran seaman, swung the ship about and headed on a course to intercept the parachute blowing across the waves like a seagoing tumbleweed.

Judging speed and direction and coming to an interception course in a matter of seconds is a difficult operation, but Robbins's seaman's eye, sharpened by years of destroyer station keeping, stood him in good stead. Nevertheless, he was afraid that he had overshot his mark. The parachute, he thought, would pass astern.

"All engines back full!"

But then he realized that the churning screws might chew up the angled flier.

"All engines stop!"

It had been just enough back-kick, and the parachute blew into the fantail.

Willing hands quickly hauled the unconscious Menard aboard. He had stopped breathing and the cold water had turned his limp body blue. Two hours of labor by the pharmacist mates brought him around. It had been a close call. A few more minutes in the icy water and this section of the book would not have been written.

The next day Menard, back on his feet, began to taste the full salty flavor of life at sea aboard a small ship. Chairs had to be lashed to the deck. Meals had to be eaten from tables covered with wooden overlays that held the sliding plates in place. The destroyer rolled and dipped, pitched and wallowed, threw up huge curtains of spray, slapped against waves, and shook from hawsepipe to stern tubes. Menard thought longingly of the relatively horizontal consistency of the big carriers. After two days of stomach-churning motion, Menard, miserable and green, was ready to throw in the towel. It seemed he would never see his carrier again, for TAUSSIG could not leave station to engage in taxi service. But Menard's luck, in spite of the recent drains, had not yet run out.

On February 19, a piece of piping in one of TAUSSIG's boilers broke and after much inquiring it was found that only one ship, recently arrived from the States, had spare stocks of the same type. The TAUSSIG was relieved at her station and headed for the well-supplied ship at best speed.

"Where are we heading?" idly inquired Menard.

"For the carrier RANDOLPH to pick up some piping."

Menard's guardian angel must have had Hollywood experience, for, of course, RANDOLPH was the flier's ship.

Later that day, his feet dangling from a bosun's chair on a thin line between the diving destroyer and the steady carrier, Menard waved goodbye to skipper Robbins, the man whose seamanship had saved his life.

Robbins waved back, at the same time keeping an eye cocked on the gyro repeater as it clicked back and forth with the yawing of the ship. When the swap had been completed—a flier for some piping—Robbins climbed back up in his big comfortable chair on the bridge and lit his pipe. There he sat, silently smoking, as his ship headed back toward its station.

8

About noon on the 17th, since the weather was growing worse, Spruance and Mitscher put their heads together by dispatch and decided to call off the afternoon strikes, pack up the plans, and head for Iwo. The mission over Tokyo had been accomplished. Jap air power in the homeland had been paralyzed, at least temporarily, and the attackers at Iwo Jima were safe from heavy aerial counterattacks. In the air 416 Jap planes had been destroyed and on the ground 354 more. The carriers lost 34 fighters and 2 torpedo bombers. One fuselage and two aircraft engine factories had been bombed to such an extent that production was halted from a month to six weeks. Fighter opposition had been intense but not very well co-ordinated. Antiaircraft fire had been intense, especially around the factories, but not very accurate.

But most amazing of all was the fact that not one Jap plane had got through to attack the carriers. Some bogeys were picked up by picket destroyers, ships that operated in pairs as close as 40 miles from the coast, but they had been shot down either by antiaircraft fire or by the combat air patrol. The larger ships of the task force, lying well hidden under the weather, had not even seen a Jap much less fired a shot.

Exactly one year before, the raid on Truk had been considered momentous. Now no spot in the homeland was safe from the Navy's aircraft.

Carrier-based air power, the spearhead of the Pacific War, had relentlessly tracked the Japanese tiger to his lair and was ready to slay him there.

9

Over the ocean, on the ocean; the under-the-ocean Navy was there, too. Consider the story of the submarine POMFRET, Lieutenant Commander John B. Hess, commanding. Grouped with four other submarines—PIPER, BOWFIN, TREPANG, and STERLET—Commander Bernard F. McMahon, riding in PIPER, group commander—she set out on her Fourth War Patrol.

The task of this group was to run interference for the fast carriers before the Tokyo strikes and then to stand by to pick up any fly boys (airplane drivers) who might be so unfortunate as to hit the drink. First

the subs were to make a sweep of Japan for enemy patrols and picket boats. Then they were to take up their lifeguard stations (B-29 crews, too, could avail themselves of the pickup service) and at the same time keep an eye open for a suicide charge of what remained of the Jap fleet.

After a brief stop at Saipan the five subs headed north. No pickets were found and by February 15 POMFRET had taken up its lifeguard station off the entrance to Sagami Bay which, in reality, is a sort of outer Tokyo Bay. Next morning, while preparing to surface, Hess saw the first waves of fighters from Task Force 38 coming in "right off the water." When POMFRET broke water it was found that "the weather was miserable. Ceiling about 600 feet, solid overcast, alternate rain, snow, and hail with a twenty-knot wind from the northeast."

Wave after wave of fighters continued to come in from the southeast. "Truly a wonderful sight," logged Hess.

And he continued: "We could hear hysterical Japs jabbering over the radio. They would start saying something and their voices would get higher and higher as they grew more and more excited. Then finally we began hearing American voices over the same frequency (we had the speakers tapped in for the benefit of all hands). We heard such things as 'There's nothing here but flame and wreckage'; and 'I'm strafing 60 parked planes. They're all on fire. No opposition.'

"About three-thirty in the afternoon we sighted a Jap rubber life raft complete with one Jap. We maneuvered to pick him up—we had to pick somebody up—but he apparently remembered all he had been taught, for he pulled off his life jacket and tried to drown himself. He seemed to find this a painful process and was unable to hold his head under water long enough to do the trick. Finally, after struggling for over half an hour, he gave up the idea and came aboard. I never before realized how hard it is to put a submarine alongside a man who insists on swimming away. After stripping, he was turned over to the pharmacist's mate. With him he had a small memo book about two-thirds full of Jap writing and two condoms he wasn't going to be able to use for a long time. Apparently he was a navy pilot but we did not question him, leaving that to the professionals, although he did speak some English."

About 5:30 that afternoon POMFRET got a call to pick up a flier—this time an American—down to the southwest. At flank speed she headed for the spot and found a plane circling there. Fifty minutes later Lieutenant (jg) John P. Farrell from the HORNET was hauled aboard, tired

and dripping. He had survived in the cold ocean without a raft, buoyed up only by his life jacket.

The POMFRET's first day was over. She had been pounded about by the cold, heavy sea, and being but eleven miles from shore, her crew had been under a constant nervous strain. That night, to provide well-deserved rest, she lay submerged for four hours.

The next morning she again rose to the surface and again she saw wave after wave of planes head in toward Tokyo. But this time there were many dive bombers and torpedo bombers as well as fighters.

Her great chance did not come till a little after noon.

"After a very quiet morning," reads the log, "we finally got some business. Received report of a fighter down in Sagami Nada (Bay), headed for entrance at flank speed. We have seen no trace of our supposed fighter escort since 1100 so requested the group over the downed fighter to give us cover on the way in . . ."

And "in" was really that, practically astride the submarine nets at the entrance to Tokyo Bay.

"We kept working further and further in, being led on by the planes. I was beginning to feel a bit uneasy as we were getting uncomfortably close to the shallow area in the middle of Sagami Nada. But the planes kept telling us to come right a little bit, then a little bit more.

"The surface haze was terrific and we would see nothing to take cuts (bearings) on. Had to depend entirely on radar for navigation . . . To the northwest three or four barges and sampans were in sight.

"The planes told us they would have to leave very shortly due to lack of fuel, so we asked them to request special cover to get us back out. The pilot came back with 'Wilco.'

"We were coached closer and closer to the shallow section and finally at 1400 picked up the downed pilot, Ensign Richard L. Buchanan from CABOT."

When POMFRET reached him, he was just nine miles off the peninsula which forms one side of Tokyo Bay and on which was located the famous Yokosuka naval base.

The score in pickups was now one Jap and two Americans, but at five o'clock Hess "sighted one frantically waving Jap in a small swamped row-boat probably from Smokey Joe, a picket boat that was burning in the distance. As we pulled up close aboard he suddenly realized who we were and the sudden look of astonishment and horror on his face was truly

pathetic. Whoever speaks of the inscrutable Oriental never saw this fellow. He stopped waving and held his hands up.

"When he realized we were going to pick him up instead of shooting him, he jumped out of the boat and swam toward us. Took him aboard and he behaved like a friendly and fawning puppy. He was very busy saying: 'Thank you, thank you. Me a little Jap newspaper boy.'"

The rest of the Fourth War Patrol of POMFRET was not without adventure, in fact she was probably the first and only submarine to assist in shooting down two enemy planes by vectoring her high-flying air cover through a low ceiling to the unsuspecting enemy, but the cruise will be remembered because of the unprecedented penetration of Tokyo Bay to rescue one individual. It was this emphasis on the value of a human life that sustained the morale of naval fliers as they winged their way toward the unknown through cold, hostile skies.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

And One for Good Measure

I

"**T**HERE is a vicious rumor," wrote one Air Group chronicler, "that after we finish our support work at Iwo Jima, we will strike Tokyo again." Unlike most scuttlebutt, this was 100 per cent correct.

After Iwo Jima, the original plan called for a sweeping arc of strikes on the Home Islands: Nagoya, third city of Japan, 235 miles west of Tokyo; the Inland Sea area; the island of Kyushu; and finally down to Okinawa on the tip of the Nansei Shoto chain. But Spruance and his staff decided that another concentrated raid on the aircraft engine plants in the Tokyo region would do more to weaken the Nip in the air than the previously planned strikes, so sights were shifted back to Tokyo. Fan-tail strategists shook their heads and agreed that they had known it all the time.

On February 23, after four days of support at Iwo during which 25 planes were lost, the fast carriers rendezvoused with Rear Admiral Donald B. Beary's seagoing filling stations to fill their bellies with oil and bullets. It was a rough, bouncing day but in spite of a number of parted fuel lines the thirst of the big ships was quenched and their ammunition lockers filled.

By this stage of the war the Navy had perfected a technique of safely transferring ammunition at sea, truly a revolutionary feat since it permitted the fleet to operate almost indefinitely away from its bases. Sea power had become as flexible as its men and its ships, for where the fleet went it was followed by a chunk of United States—stores, foundries, machine shops, drydocks, arsenals.

As replenishment aircraft flew from the baby flat-tops of the supply train to the big boys in the task groups, Admiral Spruance in his flagship INDIANAPOLIS together with WASHINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA, BILOXI, and several destroyers—the ships that had been detached from the fast carrier

groups in order to shell battered Iwo—rejoined the task force for the second round against Tokyo.

The next day the wind grew stronger and the sea grew higher. Nevertheless, the wallowing destroyers came alongside the larger ships to "top off," a phrase usually applied to the process of squeezing the last bit of oil into fuel tanks, but a phrase which the destroyer BRONSON almost applied in its literal sense when it rolled against YORKTOWN's overhanging flight deck and almost knocked its foremast off.

The usual banter flew back and forth during the fueling. As one picket destroyer came alongside a battleship, a boatswain's mate on the destroyer cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted, half from conviction, half from envy: "Hello there, you goddam big oil barge!"

Following a course to the westward of the rocky Bonins, the Task Force in column headed north into angry seas. Soon speed had to be dropped, for the small destroyers were battering themselves groggy in the heavy swells. The MOALE, while attempting to make increased speed to gain her picket station ahead of the fleet, smashed her bow and forecastle deck and flooded several compartments. Her injuries were so severe that she could make only 5 knots and had to return alone to Saipan for repairs.

In such weather planes could not be launched, so the fleet felt its way toward Honshu guided by the groping fingers of radar.

During the dark hours of early morning several bogeys were reported skirting the fleet. Admiral Mitscher was afraid that this time his carriers had been discovered and that perhaps a warm reception awaited his fliers in the cold skies over Tokyo.

Soon after sunup the planes of the task force took to the air, the weather over the fleet having improved somewhat. But skeptical aerologists shook their heads and muttered something about a low-pressure area to the southwest.

Four hundred fighters roared low over the snow-covered airfields of the Tokyo plain that morning, but when they got there the revetments were bare. Fields that had been speckled thick with planes the week before were practically deserted. As Mitscher had feared, the Japs "got the word" and had flown their planes to safer territory. Fighters did rise into the overcast sky but the carrier planes managed to swat over 50 back to earth while losing only three of their own.

Cold clouds of ice and snow pressed down over the whole Tokyo area and many target areas were entirely weathered out. One group of 87—

fighters, dive bombers, and torpedo bombers loaded with napalm bombs, incendiaries and propaganda leaflets—unable to get through to attack the Sumida district of Tokyo had to jettison their bombs at sea.

The area to the north of Tokyo was reported clear, so a hundred planes, half bombers, went in that direction to hit at the vital engine factories. But it was the same story—weathered out. The disappointed fliers found some compensation in using their bombs on the aircraft assembly plants at Ota and Koizumi.

By noon it was clear that Old Dame Nature had, for some perverse reason, aligned herself with the Nips, so Mitscher reluctantly called all his “chickens” back to roost and headed southwest, hoping to find better weather over Nagoya the next day.

If the people of Tokyo, peeking skyward from their shelters, thought that their tribulations were over for the day when the quick little planes had flown back to sea, they were wrong.

Commencing at two in the afternoon, and continuing for two hours, over 200 Super-fortresses of the 21st Bomber Command sowed hundreds of tons of bombs on the city through the heavy overcast, in the largest daylight attack of the war.

Premier Kuniaki Koiso, according to one enemy broadcast, expressed anger “at the enemy’s arrogance and lawlessness” and requested an audience with the Emperor to offer his and the cabinet’s apologies “for the unforgivable negligence.”

Koiso would have done well to save his breath. The worst was yet to come.

2

Spruance, Mitscher & Co. continued to buck wind and wave. A wintry 33-knot wind from dead ahead plus a convulsive sea slowed the force down to 12 knots as it passed between Tori Shima and Sumisu Shima, two volcanic islands in the Bonin chain. The destroyers pounded helplessly in the heavy sea and three of them, STEPHEN POTTER, JOHN W. WEEKS, and BENHAM, suffered rather severe damages.

During this rough, wind-swept night the Imperial Japanese Navy vigorously attacked Task Force 38—with a picket boat.

A half hour after midnight the destroyer PORTERFIELD, in the van of the screen surrounding Sherman’s task group, made a radar contact with

a surface target directly ahead. Thinking the target might be friendly, PORTERFIELD closed until, at 3,000 yards, it was identified as a 100-foot Japanese picket boat. The destroyer immediately opened fire. Only 16 rounds of 5-inch were loosed, however, before the range was fouled by other ships of the task group that were sweeping around the pert little picket.

The Jap had a gun of his own and quickly started using it. Popping away like a seagoing David he managed to score some telling hits on PORTERFIELD, knocking out her voice radio, damaging her radar, and killing one officer and wounding thirteen men.

As the screen of the task group passed by the two engaged vessels the light cruiser PASADENA nearly rammed the sharp-eyed worry-wort. The Jap retaliated by training his 2-inch gun on the cruiser and rapidly hitting her 13 times.

The PORTERFIELD, with her voice radio not functioning, was unable to identify herself to the shadowy ships that were slipping by, so she was told to withdraw from the scene of action, which she did, no doubt feeling as irate and indignant as a teacher punched in the nose by a nasty child.

The destroyer STOCKHAM cleaned up the embarrassing situation by sinking the troublesome spitkit.

Because of the rough seas, the task force was not able to reach the launching point the next morning for the intended strike on Nagoya, a vital center of the Japanese aircraft industry, so the strike was called off.

The gods of the wind were protecting Japan well—for the time being.

There remained one more item on the agenda of Task Force 58: a photographic "strike" on Okinawa, whose invasion was almost at hand. In fact, considered strategically, the attack on Okinawa had already begun with the invasion of Iwo.

After a February 27 fueling rendezvous with the omnipresent tankers the fast carriers consolidated into three task groups and steamed south. Spruance, in INDIANAPOLIS, peeled off and headed back to Iwo Jima.

The one-day strike on Okinawa on March 1 was relatively uneventful. No enemy rose to defend the island and the only Japanese planes shot out of the air, four in all, were search planes found far to the north near Kyushu. Not even many aircraft were found parked on the fields and only 36 were reported destroyed, many of these perhaps being straw

dummies. After bombing and rocketing hangars the itchy fighters were forced to roam the countryside looking for targets of "last resort" such as radio shacks, radar stations, warehouses, sugar mills, lumberyards, and small ships along the coast. The photographic gaps in the files of CINCPAC (Commander in Chief Pacific Ocean Areas: Nimitz) were filled in by many well-aimed cameras.

But even these less spectacular operations cost a price, and the price paid this time was 10 men and 21 planes. These men met death in many ways—some were knocked from the skies by accurate enemy AA fire, some crashed while landing or taking off from the carriers, one was disintegrated by the explosion of his own bomb. Two of the lost planes were from ESSEX and oddly enough this was the same as her losses in three days of combat over Tokyo. The BELLEAU WOOD was the heavy loser, with five planes down.

But when death is analyzed quantitatively, one loses sight of its personal character. Each death is complete in itself, entirely unrelated to other deaths. The technique of adding deaths together and arriving at a figure of losses is an artificial device imposed on the dead by the living. And in the statistical, the human is sometimes forgotten.

No, the losses over Okinawa were not great—statistically. But men did die, and for them it was the end, as completely and absolutely as if they had died with thousands of others.

Lieutenant Jacob M. Reisert, executive officer of Torpedo 30 (BELLEAU WOOD), was one of those who died. During a bombing run on a destroyer found near Ishigaki Jima his torpedo bomber was hit by a burst of flak. One gasoline tank was holed and the bomb-bay doors were jammed open. In such condition the plane could not land aboard a carrier, so two accompanying fighters escorted Reisert to a lifeguard submarine, which was surfaced and waiting near Okinawa.

There Reisert ordered his crewmen, Charles R. McCall, Aviation Radioman 3/c, and William P. O'Shea, Aviation Machinist's Mate 3/c, to bail out. Then Reisert, too, jumped.

Quickly the submarine gathered up the three men. McCall and O'Shea were in good condition but Reisert was unconscious and dying from shrapnel wounds. His life had been slowly draining away as he flew the 200 miles to the submarine. He had managed to save his crewmen but did not have the strength left to save himself. All efforts to revive him proved futile and the next day his body was slipped quietly into the sea.

3

As Task Force 58 pulled away from Okinawa and headed for Ulithi a group of cruisers and destroyers¹ under Rear Admiral Francis E. M. Whiting was ordered to shell the small (2½-mile circumference) island of Okino Daito Shima, which lies 215 miles to the southeast of Okinawa and only 450 miles from the Japanese mainland.

Shortly after midnight the ships, steaming in column 2½ miles off-shore, made three firing runs. While an illuminating destroyer silhouetted the isolated hunk of empire with the icy-white light of star shells, the other ships smothered the island with 6,000 rounds of 6-inch and 5-inch projectiles.

This was the closest point to Japan a U.S. surface force had ever come to strike with its guns.

Okino's distinction, however, was to be short-lived.

¹ VINCENNES (F), MIAMI, SAN DIEGO—cruisers.

DE HAVEN, MANSFIELD, COLLETT, LYMAN K. SWENSON, SAMUEL N. MOORE, TAUSSIG, BLUE, and BRUSH—destroyers.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

A Song to Remember

I

ULITHI was a combination of Pittsburgh and Chautauqua, heaven and hell, the graveyard shift and a fireman's picnic.

The atoll provided anchorage, shipyard, operating base; it was the blacksmith shop, grocery store, health center, and playground of the Pacific fleets, ships and men. Ulithi was one more reason why "the fleet that came to stay"—stayed. Busiest of the palm-crested coral mounds that made up the atoll was the islet with the musical comedy name, Mog Mog.

Any reasonably active person could walk around Mog Mog's perimeter between meals, but with typical Navy economy of space the overgrown sand dune was made into a playground for thousands of men, with baseball diamonds, horseshoe pits, basketball courts, bathing beaches, and just plain lolling places. Between noon and five o'clock each day Mog Mog resembled a sandwich discarded near an anthep. While the irrepressibly athletic utilized the sports fields and surf, and the thoughtful strolled the beaches contemplatively looking for seashells, the majority sprawled in the shade of the palms and each other absorbing incredible quantities of canned beer.

They were tired men. Tired from fighting, fighting the enemy and fighting the sea; tired from the heavy work of preparing the ships and airplanes for the next sortie, loading thousands of tons of bombs, rockets, torpedoes, and shells; thousands of tons of fuel for ships, planes, and—in the form of the world's best food—for men.

The men talked as they worked and played—and some talked in their sleep—about two things: home and the next operation. One thing seemed certain. The next would be an attack in force on Japanese soil. After all, there weren't any other places to go.

2

Nansei Shoto, a chain of islands, five island groups 790 miles long, crossing the Pacific approaches to the East China Sea, provides a natural barrier against invasion of the Jap homeland from the south. The two southernmost groups, Sakiashima Gunto and Okinawa Gunto, are known collectively as the Ryukyu Islands, the other three as the Satsunan Islands.

Okinawa Gunto, consisting of Okinawa Shima, Ie Shima, Kerama Retto and smaller islands, is approximately in the center of Nansei Shoto. The group spreads roughly 90 miles east and west and 65 miles north and south. Okinawa, the largest, 60 miles long and from 8 to 10 miles wide, is the most important island of the Nansei Shoto and lies roughly equidistant from Formosa on the southwest, China on the west, and Japan on the northeast, or about 400 miles.

From Okinawan airbases, swarms of fighter-escorted medium bombers, heavy bombers, and B-29s could plaster Formosa, the great Japanese-held central China ports, and the Japanese industrial cities. Furthermore, staging bases could be provided for the final drive on Japan. So long as it remained in Japanese hands, the reverse was true—its airfields harried us and were a barrier to many desirable targets. With this knowledge Nimitz's choice of positions to attack was made very simple—as simple as the directive issued a short time later:

The forces under my command are ordered to seize, occupy and defend Okinawa Gunto in order to:

- (a) Attack the main islands of Japan and their sea approaches with ships and planes.
- (b) Support further attacks on the regions bordering the East China Sea.
- (c) Sever Japanese sea and air communications between the Empire and the mainland of Asia, Formosa, Malaya, and the Netherlands East Indies.

Literally "cut off their water" was what Nimitz wanted.

It sounds rather mild, but it was nothing less than orders to invade the lair of a wounded tiger.

3

The planning for Okinawa followed much the same pattern as had all previous assaults across the Pacific.

"We always started with the same question," said Admiral Spruance. "What do the troops want?"

In this case the troops wanted plenty. They wanted a lift to a spot just 325 miles from Japan's main office—closer than St. Louis is to Milwaukee. They wanted a constant stream of men and materials to replace battle losses. They wanted protection from Jap surface and Jap air until they could stand alone.

Protection from Jap surface forces would be easy. The Japs had little left since the biggest part of their fleet had been prematurely decommissioned by United States and Allied submarines and aerial forces. Oh, they had two or three battleships maybe, two or three carriers, four or five cruisers, and a handful of destroyers, but who cared?

Protection from Jap air was another matter. Up to this point in the Pacific fighting distance had always been against Jap air, but now distance was not even a consideration. By air Okinawa was only an hour's run from Japan's network of Kyushu airfields. It was about the same distance from Formosan and Chinese airbases, either one or both of which the Japanese might choose to use as a staging base depending on the tactical defense used by U.S. forces in the assault area.

The command ladder, as can well be imagined, was necessarily complicated because of its size.

On the top run, of course, were the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, General George C. Marshall and Admiral Ernest J. King. Next came Admiral Nimitz supported by Admiral Spruance and his massive Fifth Fleet. In strategic support, Nimitz had three major forces: MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces, principally the Air Forces, who were to hold down Formosa until the British Pacific Fleet arrived and then would pin down the enemy air activities in the Sakishima Gunto area and post a lookout for enemy movements by sea and by air in its area.

Brigadier General LeMay's Twentieth Air Force, principally the 21st Bomber Command earthed on the Marianas, was to photograph the objective area, continue destructive attacks on Honshu's principal cities. Most important, during the critical stage of the assault the B-29s were to carry out diversionary attacks on southern Kyushu, to keep the enemy occupied while the Army and Navy finished its job 325 miles to the south. The 20th Bomber Command, also a part of the Twentieth Air Force, was assigned reconnaissance work and to provide weather information for the fleet.

Major General Claire Lee Chennault's planes, under Lieutenant General A. C. Wedemeyer's forces in China, had a smaller but very important role to play. These bombers flew aerial reconnaissance along the stretches of China's coastal areas and blasted heavy strikes on the Hong Kong area.

The command relationships became even more complicated in lower echelons because many ships were assigned different tasks during various phases of the siege; and in many cases ships operated in two or more task forces or groups.

4

Nimitz's directive to Spruance for the capture, defense, and development of Okinawa, naming him as the Officer Commanding the Operation, was very broad. In the directive, Nimitz carefully pointed out that this operation, although initially amphibious, was entirely different from past Pacific assaults. For the first time a field army would go into action and, since the target area was right in Japan's back yard, it was likely that combat conditions would extend for a considerable period of time. It lasted nearly three months.

As Spruance determined that the amphibious phase of each part of the operation had ended, he was directed to turn over command of all forces ashore to Lieutenant General S. B. Buckner, Jr., Commanding General Expeditionary Troops and Commander Tenth Army. Finally, as the tactical situation permitted, Nimitz would relieve the Commander Fifth Fleet of all responsibility and turn the Ryukyu show over to Buckner, who then would be responsible to Nimitz.

Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, CTF 51, Commander Expeditionary Force, the Navy's infantry, was charged directly with capturing, defending, and occupying Okinawa. In making plans for the landing, Buckner was told to talk with Turner, who had the know-how on beach-heads.

Directly under Turner was Rear Admiral W. H. P. ("Spike") Blandy as Commander Support Amphibious Force. Translated, this meant simply that Blandy's units, CVEs, minesweepers, underwater demolition teams, landing craft gunboats, and the heavy fire-support ships as loaned by Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo, CTF 54, would protect the approach of the assault forces and prepare the landing beaches for invasion. The

Northern Attack Force, Rear Admiral L. F. Reisdner, and the Southern Attack Force, Rear Admiral J. L. Hall, Jr., were charged with landing the troops over the selected beaches.

Turner's real guardian, however, was Mitscher's flexible Task Force 58, the "if and when" boys. If and when the Japs decided to fight, regardless of weapons employed, TF 58 would be standing by—just over the horizon.

Waiting largely because of the efforts of Task Group 50.8 and Service Squadron 10 commanded by Rear Admiral D. B. Beary and Commodore W. R. Carter, respectively. They kept the fast carriers at sea for two and one-half months, longer than any previous flat-top cruise in the Pacific war. They furnished fresh and frozen foods, dry provisions, ammunition, fuel, general stores, aircraft, aviation spares, new men to replace the dead, blood plasma, all in sufficient quantity to replenish the fleet without its returning to base.

So Ulithi became busier and busier still.

5

In the words of Commodore R. W. Bates, "it wasn't only busy; it was reckless as well"—and Bates ought to know.

He and his boss, Vice Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, victor at Surigao Strait and Lingayen Gulf, and now assigned to command Task Force 54, the Okinawa bombardment and fire-support group, had borrowed Commodore Kessing's barge for a speedy trip across the lagoon.

"All I know about what happened," said Bates, "is what they told me after I regained consciousness. They tell me that while making about 20 knots we struck one of those 16-ton buoys.

"Admiral Oldendorf, who that very day had raised his flag in the battleship *TENNESSEE*, was definitely knocked out for the assault on Okinawa. He had several ribs cracked and was pretty badly shaken up. Although my bandaged head felt big as a barrel, Admiral Spruance requested, if humanly possible, that I go on to Okinawa as Chief of Staff for Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo, Oldendorf's relief. I was anxious to go, but doubted if I would be of much help."

But this was only the beginning of trouble.

The next evening, March 11, 1945, all was quiet and peaceful. Chow had been served and most of the cooks had secured the galleys. Bakers

had requested permission to keep lighted fires on some ships to prepare rolls and bread for the following day. The "joe pots" bubbled with black coffee and a tropical rain cloud had hung over the ships long enough for the customary wetting down of all hands before moving on.

Outdoor movies were being shown on forecastles, fantails, quarter-decks, and a general spirit of make-believe cheerfulness prevailed. Everyone felt his ship to be safely bedded down for the night. Everyone felt too safe! On one of the carriers, the *RANDOLPH* (Captain Felix Baker), the movie *A Song to Remember* was in progress on the hangar deck. Many of the carrier's crew have forgotten the song, but all remember that night—all except the 27 men who were killed a few moments later.

The first showing of *A Song to Remember* had ended; the second show was about to begin. Gossiping, bantering, the incoming crowd shoved past the departing audience, and then every man was toppled to the deck as, with a noise like the end of the world, a Kamikaze crashed the ship.

Two Japanese "Franceses" had slipped through the radar screen, evaded the interceptor patrols. One picked the *RANDOLPH*—

Skippers of ships anchored 20 miles distant saw the explosion from their seats at the movies and sent their ships to general quarters. Many of them thought Japanese midget submarines had slipped through the nets again; others remembered Toyko Rose's broadcast beamed, for some unexplainable reason, to the carrier *YORKTOWN*.

"Think you're nice and safe at Ulithi, don't you, *YORKTOWN*?" she taunted. "Well, we're fixing up a little surprise for you."

The *RANDOLPH* had received *YORKTOWN*'s surprise.

The second plane of *YORKTOWN*'s surprise pack veered off to smack what the Japanese pilot must have thought to be the largest carrier of them all. But it was skinny little Falalap Island, and all that he damaged, besides himself, was Commodore Kessing's beached and battered barge.

The *RANDOLPH*'s damage-control parties had all fires extinguished in two and one-half hours. Only three weeks late, with a helping hand from the repair ship *JASON* (Commander Ehrwald F. Beck), the big carrier joined her task group off Okinawa.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Perry Was Here

I

NINETY-TWO YEARS before Admiral Spruance's fleet arrived off Okinawa another American flag officer, Matthew Calbraith Perry, made a peaceful conquest of the island, but his government at Washington wanted none of it. Perry, in a sort of trial heat for his venture in opening Japan, sailed into Naha harbor and before he left had negotiated a trade treaty with Okinawa's king, and purchased a large tract of harbor front for a naval coaling station.

It is useless, if entertaining, to speculate on the course history might have taken had the United States utilized Perry's pacific penetration of Formosa, the Bonins, and Okinawa. But here we were back again to claim by naval force the same territory that naval diplomacy had once obtained.

Okinawa was annexed by the Japan Perry had awakened, in 1879. Two hundred and seventy years before that, the Japanese had invaded the island and put a brutal end to Okinawa's 200-year Golden Age, during which the arts had flourished in step with a rich commerce, mostly with China. After the conquest of 1609, Okinawan cultural life degenerated. Vassal to the Prince of Satsuma, the island prospered as a way station in the bootleg commerce between China and Japan during the latter's years of isolation. A mixture of the bloodstreams of a dozen prehistoric migrant peoples, Okinawans are not Japanese, not Chinese, but physiologically and ethnologically a bit of both blended in with a basic stock which was compounded in prehistoric times out of the eastward-faring Asiatic migrants whose descendants are the Eskimo and the American Indian.

The earliest date in Okinawan chronology is A.D. 600, and that is recorded not in the island's annals, but in China's. Some Chinese explorers landed on Okinawa, announced its annexation to the Flowery Kingdom, and demanded fealty and tribute. Instead, they were chased off.

The first momentous date in Okinawan history is 1187, when one

Shun-ten consolidated all the dozen or so feudal baronies and established the kingdom of Okinawa with himself, of course, as king.

The latest date, and most momentous of all, is April 1, 1945.

2

Between those two dates, the Okinawans remained Okinawans with a stubborn pride that accented the Japanese they were forced to speak, and made them such uninspired subjects of the Mikado that their conscripts were used as labor battalions only in Japan's wars of expansion. The Japanese thought they would at least fight for their homeland against the Americans, and between 7,000 and 10,000 were incorporated in the defending forces. But the Okinawans regarded the battle for their island as a combat between two invaders, and most of the troops quietly effaced themselves by swapping their uniforms for sketchy civilian attire and merging with the populace.

The worst damage the Okinawans inflicted in the war still goes on. They are snail-eaters. Wherever an Okinawan labor battalion occupied a Pacific island in Micronesia, the snails they brought with them escaped and, free from natural enemies, flourished like the uninhibited Japanese beetle in New Jersey, devouring crops and befouling the landscape.

For the past fifty years the standard of living of the Okinawans has been low primarily because Japan has never attempted to raise it. The natives, numbering nearly one-half million, subsist largely on small-scale agriculture and food from the sea. Most of the farms are located in the southern third of the island because the land is more flat and suitable for cultivation. The northern two-thirds of Okinawa is rough and mountainous, covered largely by forests and dense undergrowth—not suitable for farming or fighting.

3

How well the Japanese had fortified Okinawa was not known. Most of the U.S. intelligence had been gathered by aerial photographic reconnaissance during fast carrier strikes and to a limited extent by the later-arriving B-29s. Some knowledge was gained from documents and prisoners captured in earlier Pacific battles, but generally speaking military intelligence of Japan's inner defense ring was a scarce item.

The truth about the Japanese defenses, as the Americans were soon to discover, was that the Japanese had worked overtime to prepare for the big invasion, which they had been expecting about the same time that it actually came.

On the shoulders of stocky Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, veteran of the early Burma campaigns, was the responsibility for the defense of the Ryukyu Islands. He was assisted by bespectacled, aggressive Lieutenant General Isamu Cho and Colonel Hiromichi Yahara, who had the reputation in Japanese Army circles of being a brilliant field tactician.

Ushijima was in command of the Thirty-second Army, which included the following units:

The 62nd Division, considered by Ushijima to be the best in the Thirty-second Army. Many of these soldiers and officers had been fighting in China since 1938.

The 24th Division, which had never been in combat; the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade, which was just that—a group of soldiers who had survived U.S. submarine sinkings were mixed with a few Okinawan conscripts and laborers; and the Okinawa Naval Base Force under Rear Admiral Minoru Ota.

Ushijima also had an independent artillery command and tank regiment. Counting Okinawa draftees, Ushijima had nearly 100,000 men in his Thirty-second Army.

The tactical plan finally decided upon by the Japanese high command was something like this:

The Thirty-second Army would not offer great resistance at the beachheads; instead they would wait in the central portions of the islands, which they had well fortified. Let the invaders come, if they dared!

It was hoped that the decisive land battles could be avoided until the Japanese Kamikazes and surface fleet had time to engage and wipe out the American fleet.

Ushijima arranged his troops as best he could, trying to estimate as accurately as possible the tactics that would be employed by the American forces.

He sent only two trained battalions north to defend the Motobu Peninsula and left only a regiment of half-trained troops to fight a delaying action off the Hagushi beaches.

His crack 62nd Division was placed in the main defense line running across the island from Naha to Shuri to Yonabaru.

The 24th Division was sent to cover the southern end of the island supported by the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade.

A Japanese prisoner of war told an interrogator from the Tenth Army that after the Invasion of Iwo Jima, it "was taken for granted that Okinawa would be invaded about April 1, 1945."

So the Japanese were expectant, and they were not to be disappointed.

4

The American plan for the capture of Okinawa gave each of the services an opportunity to demonstrate fully its effectiveness in modern war. U.S. carrier-based and land-based airplanes and submarines had to effect the strategic separation of Okinawa from Japan. The fleet's guns and planes were to destroy enemy defenses including air installations, provide cover for the minesweepers and UDT teams while enemy mines were swept and underwater obstacles removed; protect against enemy air and surface attacks and directly support the troops until the campaign was concluded. The amphibious forces were to engage and destroy any local opposition and make it possible to land the Tenth Army, which included the 1st and 6th Marines, on April 1.

The first landings were to be made on the smaller neighboring island cluster of Kerama Retto, March 26, so that a logistic support base and a seaplane base would be provided early in the campaign.

While Kerama Retto was under siege, Okinawa would be softened up by the amphibious support force. Then on April 1 the main landings would be made on the Hagushi beaches on the western coast of Okinawa. At the same time a demonstration landing by the 2nd Marine Division would be staged on Okinawa's southeast coast to try to deceive Ushijima. If the demonstration landing did nothing more, it would force the Japanese to keep a large force deployed to the south in anticipation of an actual landing.

Later on, around mid-April, Ie Shima, a small island 4 miles northwest of Motobu Peninsula, was to be captured in order to make another airstrip available to the air forces.

5

Fleet assemblage for the Okinawa operation began in October, 1944, seven months prior to the date set for the landing, April 1, 1945. Many

key ships were in far-off places, some on the east coast of the United States and some even in the Mediterranean. Even this was much less time than required for the Normandy assembly although the assault was as large.

For Normandy, there was the narrow Atlantic to cross to a hospitable and co-operative England, and then the 50 or 20 miles of Channel to a France eager to help dislodge her captors. For Okinawa, there was the Pacific, larger than all the other lands and seas on earth put together, and a stubborn enemy to meet on his own territory.

But even distance wasn't the most extraordinary feature. Synchronization of searches, arrivals, bombardments, and landings seem even more amazing in retrospect, and they were breath-taking enough in the compulsion of all-out war effort.

For example, Wedemeyer's reconnaissance planes in China had to be co-ordinated with MacArthur's searches from the Philippines. Forces mounting in the Marianas, in Leyte, at Guadalcanal, at Ulithi had to hold separate rehearsals thousands of miles apart. It was like each player rehearsing his part separately and then appearing on Broadway for opening night without having seen other players in the cast, and expected to give a perfect performance.

The Northern Attack Force would sortie from Guadalcanal on March 8 and the Southern Attack Force would leave Leyte on March 21. They would land side by side and the first glimpse one would get of the other would be as each stormed the beach.

The Army assembled at Leyte, the Marines at Saipan, one task force at Guadalcanal, another at Espiritu Santo. Combatant ships—battleships, destroyers, mine craft, jeep carriers—by and large all prepared and replenished at Ulithi. Each force leaned on an elaborate timetable which put him on the scene with split-second precision.

The various elements of the assault force assembled as follows:

Fast Carrier Force	TF 58	Ulithi	5 to 14 March
Amphibious Support Force	TF 52	Ulithi	5 to 21 March
Gunfire and Covering Force	TF 54	Ulithi	5 to 21 March
Northern Attack Force	TF 53	Guadalcanal	1 to 8 March
Southern Attack Force	TF 55	Leyte	14 to 21 March
Western Islands Attack Group	TG 51.1	Leyte	9 to 16 March
Demonstration Group	TG 51.2	Saipan	16 to 21 March
British Carrier Force	TF 57	Ulithi	20 to 23 March
Floating Reserve	TG 51.3	Espiritu Santo	12 to 25 March

If Ushijima's boys had nothing else to do, they must have kept themselves occupied by counting U.S. naval vessels as they arrived for the invasion.

The fast carriers were too far away to count, but a rough estimate of the number of ships committed could be made from the number of planes that made daily bombing and strafing runs over their cave entrances and gun emplacements.

Then came the minesweepers, 120 of them, on Love-minus-8-day. Their principal task was to make the waters safe for Admiral Blandy's Amphibious Support Force, which was arriving the next day—and to clear an approach for the Western Islands Attack Group scheduled to arrive Love-minus-6-day. The British Task Force was scheduled to arrive in the Sakishima Gunto area on March 26. The Demonstration Group and the two attack forces would not arrive until Love-day.

If the Japanese could have seen them all, they would have counted 1,457 ships, excluding all types of personnel landing craft!

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"Attack and Destroy"

I

S WASHBUCKLING Task Force 58, Marc Mitscher commanding, passed in Indian file once more through the narrow channels of Ulithi Lagoon outward bound. It was 7:00 A.M., March 14, 1945.

Long before daylight small quick destroyers, guarding against the possibility of lurking Japanese subs beyond the coral reef, had poked their noses out of Ulithi's huge lagoon. Like so many pointers looking for coveys, they had searched hard and had found nothing.

As the carriers and heavy ships spilled slowly out of the lagoon, the destroyers, with yellow Speed 5 pennants rippling from their yardarms, fanned out to form antisubmarine screens around the four big task groups comprising the force.

That morning 58 was as close to full strength as it had ever been: 16 carriers buttressed with 8 new battleships, 2 new battle cruisers and 14 heavy and light cruisers. Each task group of four carriers had a senior pilot in command. Clark had 58.1, Davison 58.2, Fred Sherman 58.3, and Radford 58.4.

As the ships maneuvered into their cruising formations all hands were told of the target. Officially the skippers passed the word that had been gossip in the galleys days before.

"Now hear this," rang through the ships' staterooms and passageways. "We are headed for Kyushu in support of the invasion of Okinawa. We hope to launch our first strike at dawn, March 18."

This wasn't the first trip to Okinawa but it was evidently going to be the last. A majority of men had been with Mitscher for the first three strikes against Okinawa. The Japanese must be getting really sore by this time.

After watching the carrier planes' raid on January 22, a Japanese pfc had written in his diary: "It makes me mad! While some fly around overhead and strafe, the big bastards fly over the airfield and drop bombs . . .

It really makes me furious. It is past 3:00 P.M. and the raid is still on . . . At 6:00 P.M. the last two planes brought the raid to a close. What the hell kind of bastards are they? Bomb from six in the morning to six at night. I have to admit, though, that when they were using tracers this morning, it was really pretty."

Again on March 1 the fast carriers operating as TF 58 had smothered the Ryukyus after spending nearly three weeks in Japanese home waters.

But in all the previous trips the carriers had departed Ulithi with a round-trip ticket. This time they were going to stay! It was different.

2

It was quite natural, then, that the training exercises en route were taken much more seriously than they had been taken only a few days before. Pilots, who knew that once again they would fly over the Jap homeland, dived with unusual ferocity on the target sleds towed behind each carrier. AA gunners, who had seen suicide planes out of their own eyes, fired in tight-lipped earnestness at the red sleeves trailing far behind the tow-planes.

Task Force 58's mission was a familiar one—to strike a heavy neutralizing blow at airfields on the Japanese homeland and then to form a barrier between the United States invasion forces and the enemy's main airfields while the troopships converged on the target.

After "topping-off" on March 16, from Rear Admiral Beary's squat tankers and escort carriers, Mitscher set course for Kyushu, southernmost of the Island Empire, and began a high-speed run-in.

Throughout the anxious day of March 17, Mitscher's force churned along undetected. Several bogeys were reported but all either turned into "phantoms," "friendlies," or never got close enough to shadow the force.

Any relaxation was short-lived. Just before 10:00 P.M., on the evening of the strike, a bogey was detected on the radar, "bearing 142 degrees, range 72 miles." Within a few minutes at least seven additional could be counted on the spoke of green light spinning around the illuminated scopes of the radars. All were closing. TF 58 had been spotted. That much was certain. The ENTERPRISE's night fighters shot down two enemy snoopers, but others came to take their places. The enemy had been fully alerted at least eight hours in advance of the first scheduled strike. Mitscher was probably in for trouble.

At dawn on the 18th, two destroyer groups were sent on radar picket patrol, one 30 miles north and the other 30 miles west of the main force each with carrier-based fighter cover.

At 5:45 A.M., with TF 58 now about 100 miles east of Kyushu's southern tip, the first fighter sweeps roared off the carriers. Had Japanese planes been launched? If so, who would do the most damage?

With eight hours' warning, the Japanese Air Force must have thought they had plenty of time to make ready for the U.S. Navy. At the first airfield TF 58's boys attacked, the Japanese pilots were either at breakfast or prayers. Their planes, most of which were already gassed and loaded, were set up like clay pipes in a shooting gallery for the American marksman. In the day's bag of nearly 400 enemy planes, three were destroyed on the ground to one in the air.

Following the fighters within the hour, U.S. Navy bombers took off to attack airfields along Kyushu's coast. Enemy air opposition being all but nonexistent, Mitscher ordered his pilots farther inland to hit targets scheduled for the second day. In one morning, American naval aviation put Kyushu's airfields out of action for 18 days. Troops were already on Okinawa a week by then.

Over Miyazaki, Tomitaka, and Kikuchi airfields, Mitscher's fliers burned out hangars, fuel tanks, and aircraft factories and strafed grounded aircraft. Unlike the Air Force, the Navy does not credit its aviators with planes destroyed on the ground, so the estimate of 250 enemy aircraft burned on the runways was probably too low, in view of the subsequent scarcity of Japanese Army aviation. But the Japs hadn't seen anything yet!

Next day would be worse—much worse—for Nippon.

3

The Japanese fleet air arm, however, got in a few glancing blows at TF 58.

The ENTERPRISE (Captain Grover B. H. Hall) heard a Combat Air Patrol flier broadcast "Jap diving ahead of formation." Commanders Harvey Burden, navigator, and Jack Blitch, air officer, were standing on the veteran carrier's flying bridge when the warning from the sky was received. They looked up . . .

"Hard right rudder," yelled Burden. The enemy plane was streaking for the carrier's deck. It passed over the ship at bridge level, the pilot's

grimly set features plain to the eyes of Burden and Blitch. They remember feeling relieved that this was no Kamikaze as the Japanese craft veered climbing, and the next thing they saw was the bomb rising from the deck!

It was a dud. The missile hit No. 1 elevator, bounced bridge-high spraying picric acid, and then rolled to the end of the flight deck. The worst anybody suffered from that hit was an itching rash from the picric powder.

For half an hour more the Japanese pilots fainted, dived, and waited for a chance to get through the CAP. Finally another managed the trick. Skipping low over the water, the pilot made a gliding run on Radford's group. Alert gunners threw up a solid curtain of flak and the Betty exploded a few yards short of its target, Captain Giles E. Short's *INTREPID*. Parts of the plane, however, smashed into the big carrier's hull, killing one man and causing slight damage.

The choice bone for the Japanese airdales in early afternoon was the *YORKTOWN* (Captain Thomas S. Combs). She was singled out for three dive-bomber attacks. The first two planes missed with their 600-pound packages, but the third plane's bomb struck *YORKTOWN*'s island structure and exploded about hangar deck level as it grazed down the side of the ship.

Both *ENTERPRISE* and *YORKTOWN*, despite their bomb damage, continued full-scale flight operations.

4

During the night the massive task force moved northeastward to get in position for attack the next morning. A few minutes before sunup the heaviest strike yet launched, hundreds of planes thundered across the horizon—all headed for Japan's heartland, the main island of Honshu. Sherman and Clark's planes swerved slightly southward to hit warships and dockyards at Kure, while Davison and Radford's planes banked northward to splatter the big naval base at Kobe.

As expected, the Japanese threw up a murderous cone of flak over these two of their most important harbors. Sherman's group lost 5 Hell-divers and one Avenger to the flak alone. Clark's group lost 13.

But the Japanese paid through the nose. For every U.S. plane they shot down over Kure, one of their few remaining warships was taking aboard anything from a 500- to a 1,000-pound bomb. U. S. Navy pilots,

accustomed to looking for ships and identifying them at a glance, found their targets easily and in one big "swoosh" let the Japs have it. Unlike the several waves of Japs that came in on Pearl Harbor,¹ the American planes came in almost simultaneously from all points of the compass.

Left damaged were at least 16 combat ships, including the battleship YAMATO and 5 carriers, and 1 submarine evaluated as "probably sunk." Even better luck was had in smashing port facilities, dockyards, marine railways, hangars, warehouses, and barracks. By the end of that second day, any Japanese civilian living near Kure or Kobe could graphically describe war as brought to Japan on the wings of Hellcats and Avengers.

5

The inhabitants of those floating American islands, the big carriers could also describe war at the receiving end, however.

"Oriental cunning" may be the phrase to describe it, but the Japanese had a trick or two when it came to piercing the umbrella of fighters and AA over the fleet.

Flying out to sea, the enemy raiders put the sun at their backs and lined up patches of cloud for cover. Then when the air over the carrier was filled with our own planes as a strike was being launched or recovered, thus filling the radar scope with constellations of blips, the Japanese would come tearing in through the clouds.

Most of them wound up tearing a hole in the sea as the alert aerial sentries took a chance on perforating their countrymen and emptied their guns at the vermilion disks on the intruders' wings.

But two got through, and both scored.

The first dive bomber planted two 550-pound semiarmor-piercing missiles on the deck of the FRANKLIN (Captain Lesley E. Gehres). The mushroom cloud of smoke was still rising when the second flashed through the clouds and dropped a single bomb on the WASP (Captain Oscar A. Weller). The bomb passed through three decks before exploding, but in less than an hour the carrier was engaging in normal flight operations while the wound in her belly was being stitched up.

If the Japanese pilot who bombed the FRANKLIN had lived—he was shot down before he knew his missiles had hit—he would have been the lone Samurai who could have reported to Tokyo "mission accomplished."

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume I, Chapter 2.

One of his bombs exploded beneath the flight deck where a full load of gassed and armed planes were spotted for take-off. His second bomb detonated on the hangar deck, where another flight was fueled, armed, and waiting to be lifted topside.

Within a few seconds, major explosions so rocked the 27,000-ton carrier that the steel plating of surrounding ships reverberated.

The FRANKLIN, smoke covered, burning fiercely, torn by blasts which bounced men and planes the entire length of the ship, slowly groped her way out of formation. Tons of bombs exploded into fires fed by thousands of gallons of aviation gasoline. The entire after end of FRANKLIN became a veritable Moloch in whose white heat men and airplanes disintegrated before the horrified eyes of helpless shipmates.

Working in the smoke-filled engineering spaces was described by Ensign William Hayler, fresh out of the Naval Academy, like "experiencing an earthquake in the depths of a burning coal mine."

As the ship's regularly assigned damage-control parties succumbed to the inferno, volunteer fire-fighters took charge, pilots, mechanics, radiomen, and cooks manning the same hose. The ship's chaplain, Lieutenant Commander Joseph O'Callahan, turned his hose over to a blistered seaman and joined in carrying hot bombs and smoking shells to jettison them over the side.

All the while heroic survivors battled to keep the blazing ship afloat, men were dying by the score. Many were trapped below decks in the mess halls where they had gone for morning chow; others were blown into the flaming sea; some had even been thrown into bulkheads with such force that they dented the steel.

At about 9:30 A.M. the cruiser SANTA FE (Captain Harold C. Fitz) carrying Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo's division flag, slid alongside the seething carrier to remove the wounded. Scores were transferred by makeshift breeches buoys; others were carried out on the carrier's horizontal antenna masts and lowered into the waiting arms of the SANTA FE's men.

Suddenly one of the "Big Ben's" forward 5-inch gun mounts caught fire, and flames spouted from the muzzles like fire from a dragon's mouth. It seemed certain that the mount's magazine would go, and SANTA FE hurriedly veered away, but soon the danger was overcome and the cruiser went back alongside. The destroyers HUNT (Commander Halford A. Knoertzer), MARSHALL (Commander Joseph D. McKinney), HICKOX (Commander Joseph H. Wesson), and MILLER (Lieutenant Commander

Dwight L. Johnson) joined in the rescue and between them took aboard over 700 men.

There are as many tales of rescue as there are men to tell them. Typical are the stories of Motor Machinist's Mate 1/c Louis A. Vallina and Storekeeper 2/c Edward D. Mesial. Vallina was standing on the fantail when FRANKLIN was hit. Twice he started to jump over the side, but both times changed his mind for fear he would be dragged under if the ship sank.

Then he was rescued in spite of himself.

Suddenly a terrific explosion blew him so far off the ship that his fear about being sucked under was replaced by worry whether he would be found at all, but presently one of the rescue craft saw him clinging to an empty powder can and hauled him aboard.

Mesial was trapped below decks and blundered through flame and smoke to a hatch.

"I managed to crawl on my stomach to our carrier's catwalk after nearly suffocating below," Mesial said. "I heard people yelling for me to crawl over the side onto a cruiser which was picking up wounded men. I tried, and my legs wouldn't move any more. So I just lay there on the catwalk, hoping and praying that my strength would return. Then the ship listed heavily to starboard—and I tumbled off, right onto the decks of the SANTA FE."

The carrier looked like a corpse on the burning ghats to the rest of the fleet, but by early afternoon the fires were under control. A towline was rigged to her bow from PITTSBURGH (Captain John E. Gingrich). Slowly the battered ship began to move. Her remnant of able-bodied survivors was too exhausted to cheer, although a spontaneous yell went up from every ship in view.

They could make only 3 knots at first with FRANKLIN's rudder jammed hard left. Gradually the speed was worked up to 6 knots. Hope for survival had never been abandoned aboard FRANKLIN, but now it was communicated to the other ships,¹ left behind to offer protection against a coup de grâce raid and rescue of the "last man club" when the carrier took its expected plunge.

At 3:00 A.M. the next morning FRANKLIN reported "building up speed under own power."

¹ These ships include the two battle cruisers GUAM (Captain Leland P. Lovette) and ALASKA (Captain Kenneth H. Noble), the SANTA FE and the destroyer BULLARD (Commander Bernard W. Freund).

A few minutes later FRANKLIN reported "making turns for four knots with steering control expected soon."

Another hour, and FRANKLIN's engineers had cranked on over 7 knots. By 11:00 A.M. steering control had been recovered and two engines were ready to push her faster than she could be pulled.

At noon the tow was broken. The FRANKLIN's pulse, only 24 hours earlier so faint that it couldn't be felt, was beating strongly. A miracle? If so, it was a miracle compounded from the courage and skill of the ship's company and crew, of the skills of the men who had designed her and who had labored to build her from sturdy keel to stout deck.

Once more a live ship, the FRANKLIN proved she was still a fighting ship when a lone Japanese Navy bomber came suddenly diving in from sunward, eluding the Combat Air Patrol to head straight for the crippled carrier. Straight, that is, until the FRANKLIN's blistered ack-ack guns belched and hurled the enemy from his course, his heavy bomb passing completely across the FRANKLIN's flight deck to explode in the water 200 feet away.

Some of the ships offered FRANKLIN additional crewmen, food, and equipment. Through a walkie-talkie, her only operational radio, the carrier beamed back:

"We have plenty of men and food. All we want is to get the hell out of here."

6

On the afternoon of the 20th, 15 "bandits" approached the FRANKLIN rescue group—low and fast, splitting up for individual attacks. Seven were shot down by protecting fighters and seven by ship's gunners. (The ENTERPRISE was hit by friendly gunfire in the melee and had temporarily to cancel flight operations.)

The remaining plane dove straight for HANCOCK (Captain Robert F. Hickey), who at the time was fueling the destroyer HALSEY POWELL. The HANCOCK's gunners disintegrated the plane at 1,000 feet, its engine and flaming remains crashing into HALSEY POWELL's fantail as she was clearing HANCOCK's starboard side.

The suicide plane damaged the destroyer's steering engine room, parting her steering cable and causing her to knife directly across HANCOCK's bow from starboard to port, completely out of control. Only a full-speed-astern maneuver prevented HANCOCK from slicing the unmanageable destroyer in two.

The enemy's last, strongest, and most futile attempt at revenge came at 2:00 P.M., March 21. Detected 100 miles to the northwest, the attack was no surprise and nearly 150 Hellcats were swiftly on their way upstairs to engage the "bandits."

Twenty-four planes from Clark's group, 58.1, formed the vanguard of the reception committee for 32 twin-engined Bettys escorted by 16 single-engined fighters. In a sort of miniature "Marianas Turkey Shoot," all 48 Jap planes were shot down 60 miles from the task force, with a loss of only two Hellcats.

In this attack, the Japs had sent something special, although it wasn't realized until, hours later, the gun-camera films were developed. To the Hellcat pilots the Bettys had seemed not only unusually slow and cumbersome; they had a new configuration, an extra pair of small wings below the fuselage. It took some long, close scrutiny to determine the character and purpose of the excrescence. Each Betty was mothering a guided missile, the Jap version of the German V-1 rocket. The major difference was that the Japs did not plan to use radio to guide the flying bomb. Instead, each missile encased a human being. Men were easier to get than radio parts in besieged Japan.

During the night of the 21st, Task Force 58 was joined by the FRANKLIN and her escorts and together they rendezvoused with their supply ships off Okinawa. During the 4-day strike, TF 58 had destroyed 528 enemy planes, damaged 16 warships, and had suspended the usefulness of half a dozen military airbases and seaports.

Once more the fast carriers had permitted the U.S. forces to land the first solid punch on the enemy.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Warming Up

I

IN THE fading haze-filled morning twilight of March 26, the two convoys of the Western Islands Attack Group, CTG 51.1, Rear Admiral Ingolf N. Kiland, arrived off Kerama Retto to make the first landing in the battle that history would name for Okinawa, 15 miles to the eastward. The Kerama group would serve the major operation as a logistics base, a protected anchorage, a seaplane base, and a graveyard for Kamikazed ships. Embarked for the landing was the 77th Division, commanded by Major General Andrew D. Bruce. It was the first glimpse of Japanese terrain for soldiers, and they began to talk.

"Well, at least I know where we are," spoke up one. "None of them other places we been I ever heard of, before."

"What about those snakes?" asked another. "Fellow told me, he heard them talking about how these islands are just crawling with poison snakes."

"Yeah, I c'n get used to Japs but damn those damned snakes. They give me shivers."

"Never mind, Mac. Maybe we can catch us one of these geisha girls."

Kerama Retto looked like anything but a battleground. Goats might battle on those mountain peaks, but not men. Or anyhow, not the 77th Infantry Division. They were jungle fighters, they grumbled, not mountaineers. Even the coastal areas were steep and irregular. There were no roads on the islands, only pack trails. Besides, it was dog-gone cold.

Battle-trained officers concealed happy grins. The grouching was a healthy sign.

As the waves of amphibious tractors and amphibious tanks moved up to the line of departure, the four islands to be invaded (Aka, Geruma, Hakaji, and Zamami) looked quiet. No fires were burning even, although the day before, Palm Sunday, the battleship *ARKANSAS* and the cruisers

MINNEAPOLIS and SAN FRANCISCO of Admiral Deyo's bombardment group had given the entire area a heavy shellacking.

At 8:04 A.M., March 26, the first battalion of troops piled ashore on a small beach at the foot of a steep valley on Aka Shima. Machine-gun and mortar fire greeted them with no damage.

By nightfall, March 29, all of Kerama Retto was in American hands. Actually organized resistance had ended after the second day of sporadic fighting. There were a few stray Japanese troops and laborers wandering about who didn't seem to know what had happened, but what was more important, they showed no inclination to fight about it.

Even so, the Japanese commander on Aka Shima was extremely stubborn about surrender. He holed himself up in the trackless hill country. The American troops let him lie. He was harmless.

After Okinawa had been captured several teams of Nisei and Japanese officer prisoners were sent to appeal to the commander to surrender.

"No," he replied. "The Americans will be permitted to swim on the beaches here, provided they stay away from my camp in the hills."

The strange duel tenancy lasted until the war's end. Only when he was delivered a copy of the Imperial Rescript announcing Japan's surrender would the Aka commander lay down his arms. He said he could have held out for ten years.

Most important and totally unexpected fruit of the Kerama Retto operation was the capture and destruction of approximately 390 suicide boats. General Ushijima had ordered the boat operators to attack the American transports as soon as landing operations were commenced on Okinawa. By landing in Kerama Retto first, the Americans had unwittingly foiled the enemy's plot.

The 77th Division took 1,195 civilian and 121 military prisoners. It was estimated that over 500 Japanese were killed, while the U.S. forces had 31 killed and 88 wounded.

By March 29 the first seaplanes were operating out of Kerama Retto, and Rear Admiral Kiland had assumed the duty of Senior Officer Present Afloat.

While General Bruce's 77th Division was conquering Kerama Retto, Admiral Blandy's Task Force 52, with the help of Task Force 58, was

preparing to receive the Okinawa landing force. The preparation included sweeping mines, removing underwater obstructions, and bombarding the beaches with ships' guns and aircraft.

On March 23 the carrier planes began heavy, sustained aerial bombardment of Okinawa and adjacent islands. Next day, Vice Admiral Willis A. Lee, Jr., took 8 fast battleships and 12 destroyers to the southeastern coast for shore bombardment with a triple purpose: to bombard coastal defense positions, to deceive the Japanese as to the real landing beaches, and to protect the 120 minesweepers which had arrived one day in advance of Deyo's fire supporters.

Lee's battlewagons threw nearly 1,400 rounds of 16-inch shells before they departed about 2:00 P.M. It was a one-sided fight, or, rather, no fight at all. Absolutely no Japs. Opening fire at extreme range the battleships had closed within 7 miles of the beach. Bombardment results were variously described in the skippers' reports from "reasonably accurate" to "effectiveness of fire not considered great."

Japanese air, still grounded by Mitscher's whirlwind strike against Kyushu and Honshu, was practically nil. If a few Japanese barge captains had not been bold enough to put to sea and thus provided the carrier planes something to shoot at, the only triggers the aviators would have pulled the first few days would have been on cameras. There was lots of that dull work, over 28,000 reconnaissance photographs being turned in by BUNKER HILL and HORNET fliers.

Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin's Escort Carriers arrived March 25. Their planes were used primarily for protection of minesweepers and support of beach reconnaissance and underwater demolition squads. The carriers already on the scene were now put to work on systematic destruction of targets revealed in the photographs they had turned in.

On March 26, "Love-minus-7-day," airfields and suicide-boat positions were given priority; "Love-minus-6-day," midget submarine bases and heavy gun installations; "Love-minus-2-day," airstrips, bridges, and barracks. By Love-day, 3,095 sorties had been flown from carrier bases.

On March 27, shore bombardment was resumed by the Amphibious Support Force. Moving in behind the minesweepers, protecting them as the path was cleared, the warships reached positions on March 29 where pin-point targets could be identified on shore.

Then all hell tore loose. The guns concentrated on shore batteries, sea

walls, and airfields. Then they lifted to fire into cliffs and cave positions, exploding ammunition disclosing enemy positions which up to the time had been concealed.

In seven days' bombardment, Blandy's forces threw over 5,000 tons of ammunition at ground targets. They provided cover while UDT swimmers removed 2,900 wooden posts 6 to 8 inches in diameter and 4 to 8 feet high planted in four rows just off the beaches to thwart the landing craft. They had provided cover while the minesweepers swept 177 mines and destroyed approximately 80 "floaters." It was the largest assault sweep ever conducted; over 3,000 square miles of ocean had been cleared.

The fire-support plan placed three lines of ships off the shore line. LCI(G)s formed the first line at approximately 1,200 yards from the beach, within spitting distance of the shore line; destroyers at a range of 2,700 yards formed the second line, using their 40mm fire and 5-inch guns to rake inland as far as 300 yards; the outside line, 1,000 yards farther to seaward, was built of cruisers and battleships, neutralizing with their secondary and AA guns all targets one-half mile inland and with their main battery all inland targets. Blandy was tactical commander when these forces were engaged in preassault fire-support work; Deyo took over when the ships acted as a covering force and when preparing to engage enemy surface forces.

3

On the morning of March 27 the first shot was fired in the strangest, most savage, and prolonged duel in all warfare, the bloody contest between the American fleet and the Japanese air forces. It was the battle imaginative air-power fanatics had already described as spelling the extinction of navies. One tabloid magazine had practically devoted its major efforts up to this time in grisly serialized predictions that the nation's investment in its fleet would be wiped out when the ships, especially the "vulnerable carriers," came within reach of the enemy's total air strength.

As Deyo's ships returned from night cruising the morning of March 27, in the twilight between daybreak and sunup, seven planes attacked. The TENNESSEE's guns sounded the signal and four planes went down in flames, but three penetrated the wall of bursting ack-ack. One dived toward NEVADA (Captain Homer L. Grosskopf), another toward the destroyer

DORSEY (Lieutenant John M. Hayes), and another the cruiser BILOXI (Captain Paul R. Heineman). All planes went the distance; NEVADA and DORSEY were hit and BILOXI caught a near miss. All were damaged, none put out of action.

Simultaneously, 15 miles away three destroyer-type ships near Kerama Retto had been singled out by a second suicide force. Let an old friend, who appeared in the first volume of this series, tell it: Commander William W. Outerbridge, commanding the already twice-damaged destroyer O'BRIEN, once hit by shellfire at Normandy, France,¹ and again by suicide crash at Lingayen Gulf.

"We were coming in from night patrol with a couple of destroyer minelayers. The DMs had shot down two Japs, when we saw winging to our assistance what we thought was a friendly four-plane Combat Air Patrol, all flying with belly tanks.

"The tail end plane turned out to be another Japanese trick. A suicide Val, his fixed landing gear giving the same appearance as a belly tank, had formed up on three U.S. fighters. The Val suddenly peeled off from the formation and we could see that his package was for us. We poured 5-inch and 40mm into his plane but the pilot came right on, nailing both his bomb and plane to the after part of O'BRIEN's bridge.

"For the crew of the O'BRIEN, World War II had come to an end, although we didn't know it at the time," said Outerbridge rather wistfully. "I had hoped to stick around until the last shots fell, but my chances were gone. I had fired the first shot of World War II with WARD² and I knew we were close to the end."

Sadly Outerbridge walked about O'BRIEN's debris-covered decks where over 50 of his crew were sprawled lifeless. He walked up to the bow of the ship, where Steward's Mate Gillen was shaking a bottle of blood plasma.

"Captain, this sho' is a good job for me," spoke the dusky lad as he shook the bottle furiously.

"What do you mean?"

"Ah can shake this plasma, cause ah'm jist shaking anyway. Ah'm plain scared to death."

Gillen's reaction wasn't different from that of the thousands of men at Okinawa; scared to death, but not afraid to fight.

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume II.

² See BATTLE REPORT, Volume I.

4

Not all the damage was done by suicide planes. Some of it was from mines, as in the case of the destroyer HALLIGAN (Lieutenant Commander Edward T. Grace).

At 4:00 P.M. she reported on an independent patrol station in an area known to have been heavily mined with irregular patterns, but which had been swept constantly for the past 24 hours. Commander Grace had sent HALLIGAN's crew to battle stations. A few of the officers had stayed on the job without dinner; some on the bridge, some in the main battery director, and some in CIC and plot.

One officer, Ensign Richard Gardner, had his chow and had gone aft to see if the men on the 40s had been fed. Ensign Burt Jameyson, an engineering officer, likewise had eaten and gone below to check on food for the "black gang." Fate directed their footsteps.

Without any advance warning the ship shook like a water snake in the jaws of a cocker spaniel. A gout of black smoke rose from the ship, riding skyward on a pillar of white-hot steam.

Ensign Gardner, half stunned, climbed down from the after deck-house and walked forward to check the damage. When he got even with the foremast on the main deck he could go no farther. That was all there was of the HALLIGAN.

"Being pretty junior, I walked around the ship a little while looking for some officer to relieve me," said Gardner. "I didn't expect to have much to do being an ensign."

Gardner finally bumped into Ensign Jameyson, whose arm was fractured and whose face was burned black, and learned that Death had promoted him to command the shattered ship.

"We still have steam in the after fireroom and we can run on one screw if necessary," said Jameyson, his face contorted with pain.

Gardner thought hard. The ship seemed to be settling forward. Several men were trapped and it didn't seem that he could make much progress with just half a ship on one screw. He looked at the scattered debris, the dead and the wounded.

"My biggest job was to separate the dead from the wounded. We wanted to take care of the wounded. The senior medical man alive was a Chief Pharmacist's Mate, Patrick Jenkins, who had been blown up in the air with the explosion and had come down through the hatch of the for-

ward fireroom, falling into an oil tank that had been blasted open. Jenkins, oil covered and well shaken, climbed out, worked all night and well into the next day caring for the wounded.

"The only unhurt survivor from the bridge area (and only three survived) was Signalman 2/c Kimling, who was standing by the flag bag on the after part of the bridge. Kimling was blown into the air and landed approximately 150 feet aft of the bridge. His Kapok life jacket so cushioned the fall that he walked away unhurt.

"We knew the ship was sinking. We knew because the water was rising steadily on the leg of a man trapped in the forward part of the ship. At first his leg was about one foot out of the water. By the time Metal-smith 2/c Nicholas Sharon cut him free with a blow torch, his leg was in the water. We knew it was time to get off and I ordered abandon ship."

PC 584 took survivors from the portside and LSM(R) 194 from the starboard. The abandoned and lifeless hulk grounded on a small island near Okinawa where it was pounded to pieces by the merciless surf and vulturelike Jap shore batteries, an inglorious end for a fighting ship.

The story that passed around the fleet that one of the destroyers had just disappeared with all hands aboard was not quite accurate. Only half the HALLIGAN crew was unaccounted for.

The SKYLARK, a 220-foot minesweeper, met a similar death two days later when she ran into a clump of shallow-planted mines, apparently designed to sink minesweepers, just off the beachhead.

"After we struck the first mine the entire ship was in a shambles," related her skipper, Lieutenant Commander George M. Estep. "Fire, instead of smoke, poured out of the forward stack. Before we had recovered from our stunned condition, we drifted some 300 yards and struck another mine. This was just too much. We started down fast and orders were passed to abandon ship."

One of the worst minesweeping disasters took place in Nakagusukuwan Harbor, when PGM-18 was ordered in to give support to some YMSs on the morning of April 8. Lieutenant Cyril Bayley, PGM-18's skipper, circled directly under the same Japanese gun installations that the day before had hit one of the YMSs. Not drawing any fire from the beach, Bayley decided to follow behind the path cleared by the YMSs, when blooey! the whole ocean seemed to erupt.

Eyewitnesses assert the craft leaped five feet out of the water, and daylight could be seen the length of her keel. Bayley said, "When we dropped, the ship slowly began to roll over. It never stopped rolling.

When it reached about 50 degrees, I saw it was going on over so I ordered abandon ship.

"After the ship rolled over I swam to a life raft nearby which had two seamen aboard. Men were all around in the water; some on life rafts, some in life jackets, and some just swimming around. We had started pulling the wounded aboard when the last sweeper in the echelon ahead, YMS 103, cut loose her gear and turned around to pick us up. She stopped right in the middle of the survivors and started putting over Jacob's ladders, a dinghy was lowered and heaving lines were thrown to many of us in the water.

"Just as we paddled within reach of the heaving line the YMS struck a mine, sending her bow and our raft into the air. After we got back into the raft the seamen again started paddling toward the YMS, or that part of it remaining afloat. Not a minute had passed when the YMS hit a second mine, blowing off everything back of the stack and of course blowing us into the water again.

"We climbed back into the raft and before I had time to say anything, a seaman, a cocky little devil, spoke up, 'Damn, Captain!' he said, 'let's paddle in the other direction, I'm gettin' awful tired of these mines.'"

5

Enemy submarines, both large and midget, swam all around the islands, occasionally firing torpedoes but mostly observing and flashing daily "estimates of the situation" to Tokyo. One was sunk by two U.S. destroyers, STOCKTON and MORRISON. Confirmation of the kill was had when, in the midst of the oil and debris, a lone Jap sailor popped to the surface clinging to a piece of deck planking.

The last few days before the arrival of the assault forces were spent methodically hammering defenses surrounding the Hagushi beaches. Guns moved methodically from one target to another. Fleet bombardment had become a business as fundamental to amphibious warfare as laying the foundation for a house. Planes from Task Force 58 and the jeep carriers bombed and strafed until it became monotonous. Some planes spotted ships' gunfire while others searched for new targets.

On the afternoon of Love-minus-1-day, Admiral Blandy considered his preassault work finished. He radioed Admiral Turner that he thought the preparation sufficient for a successful landing. Shortly after midnight Turner arrived and took over. Already, off the western shore of Okinawa, the greatest assault force in naval history was assembling.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Going Ashore

I.

OVER 548,000 soldiers, sailors, and Marines called it Love-day at Okinawa. A few of them joked that it was "April Fool's Day" for the Japs. Elsewhere it was Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945.

The bombardment ships stood off the beachheads, guns poised and loaded, just waiting for the Japs to make the first move.

Steaming slowly in column formation to the north in support of the Third Amphibious Corps, Major General Roy S. Geiger, commanding, were four old battleships, WEST VIRGINIA (Captain Herbert V. Wiley), IDAHO (Captain Herbert J. Grassie), NEW MEXICO (Captain John M. Haines), and NEW YORK (Captain Kemp C. Christian); four cruisers, SALT LAKE CITY (Captain Edward A. Mitchell), PORTLAND (Captain Thomas G. W. Settle), PENSACOLA (Captain Allen P. Mullinix), and BILOXI (Captain Paul R. Heineman), and eight speedy destroyers, HEYWOOD L. EDWARDS (Commander Albert L. Shepherd), RICHARD P. LEARY (Commander Duncan P. Dixon, Jr.), PRESTON (Commander Goldsborough S. Patrick), NEWCOMB (Commander Ira E. McMillan), ROOKS (Commander Joseph A. McGoldrick), IRWIN (Commander Daniel B. Miller), CALLAGHAN (Commander Charles M. Bertholf), and PORTERFIELD (Commander Don W. Wulzen).

To the south, in much the same formation, were the support ships for the XXIV Army Corps, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge. These ships included three battleships, NEVADA (Captain Homer L. Grosskopf), TENNESSEE (Captain John B. Heffernan), and COLORADO (Captain Walter S. Macaulay); four cruisers, WICHITA (Captain Douglas A. Spencer), MINNEAPOLIS (Captain Harry B. Slocum), BIRMINGHAM (Captain Harry D. Power), and ST. LOUIS (Captain John B. Griggs).

In general support of the other ships and sprinkled from the beach-head area to the demonstration beachhead along Okinawa's southeastern coast, where a mock landing was to be staged simultaneously with the

OKINAWA

➔ GENERAL DIRECTION
OF U. S. DRIVES

⊙ JAPANESE AIRFIELDS
ON APRIL 1st.

NORTHERN TIP
REACHED 19 APRIL.

ERNIE PYLE †
18 April

77th DIVISION
Landed 16 April

IS SHIMA

TURNER'S
Fire Support
Ships pounded
steadily for
89 days.

TENTH ARMY LANDS
1 April

MACHINATO

NAHA

YONABARU

KERAMA RETTO

77th DIVISION
LANDED
26-31 MARCH

OKINAWA
SECURED 21 JUNE

SHIPS FROM GUADALCANAL,
ULITHI, SAIPAN, NOUMEA,
LEYTE, ESPIRITU SANTO
ARRIVE SIMULTANEOUSLY

FIGURE 6

main landing, were three battleships, TEXAS (Captain Charles A. Baker), MARYLAND (Captain Julian D. Wilson), and ARKANSAS (Captain George M. O'Rear); one cruiser, TUSCALOOSA (Captain James G. Atkins); and seven destroyers, ISHERWOOD (Commander Louis E. Schmidt), LAFFEY (Commander Frederick J. Becton), MORRISON (Commander James P. Hansen), LONGSHAW (Commander Theodore R. Dogeley), ZELLARS (Commander Leon S. Kintberger), WADSWORTH (Commander Raymond D. Fusselman), LAWS (Commander Lester O. Wood), and PICKING (Commander Benedict J. Semmes, Jr.).

Ships of all sorts; transports, minelayers, gunboats, and so many other sizes and types that the scene more nearly resembled New York Bay than an assault force off Hagushi beachhead, half the world away. Even in their war paint, swishing long lace trains of bubbling wake behind them, the ships seemed literally to be on parade. For the United States Navy there could have been no more impressive Easter pageant.

As dawn came, gun covers were yanked off, ammunition lockers opened, sound-powered phones fumbled free of their steel containers. All hands stood by for the warning buzzer to open fire, sniffing the off-shore breeze, the new hands affecting a nonchalance the most battle-hardened veteran didn't feel.

There were a few minutes of waiting. Some men gazed intently through binoculars at the sea walls, gaping at shell holes the ships' guns had methodically torn at 100-yard intervals. They looked on beyond the sea walls, at the rolling emerald-green hills. Yes, it looked something like California except there was no haze or mist; nothing but a soft, warm spring breeze blowing gently seaward.

Then came a purr which became a buzz and grew to a head-filling roar as the hundreds of Navy planes swarmed in from Clark, Sherman, and Radford's fast carrier groups to give the ground troops the close tactical support only naval air power could supply. From Durgin's jeep carriers came additional planes for the same purpose. Big lumbering PBM seaplanes ranged northward from Kerama Retto to keep close tab on Jap counterpunches. Between 7:00 and 10:00 A.M. over 500 carrier-based planes were over Okinawa, strafing, darting the new "Tiny Tim" rockets into enemy strong points, bombing, and as one aviator put it, "raising hell generally."

Not all the planes were heavily armored, high-powered Hellcats, Corsairs, and Avengers. Occasionally one glimpsed yellow specks dancing

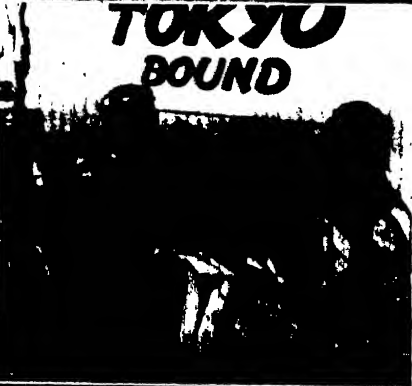


LATE XLIX—Swarms of Navy and Air Force bombing planes soften up the Japanese homeland (above) TBMs and SB2Cs, from carriers of the mighty Third Fleet, loose their missiles (akodate, July 15, 1945. The vital ferry link between Honshu and Hokkaido was also severed in this raid. (below) Giant wings nearly blotted out the sun during a daylight attack on Yokohama, May 29, when more than 400 superfortresses devastated seven square miles of the city with incendiary bombs.





PLATE L—(upper) Japan's sacred mountain Fujiyama seems to look on placidly as more than fifty U.S. Navy carrier planes sweep by to bomb the Imperial capital. The planes are Curtiss Helldivers, General Motors Avengers, and Grumman Hellcats.



(center) Today's target—Tokyo! The first carrier plane attack on Tokyo, February 16-17, 1945, achieved both surprise and success. Here a group of sober-faced pilots are briefed in a carrier ready room: first row, left, Lt. John Weslewsiti, and Lt. Milton Jacobs: second row, left, Ensign Ray G. Keeller, and Lt. John P. Snyder: third row, left, Ensign Fred Bright, and Ensign Joseph Fadely.

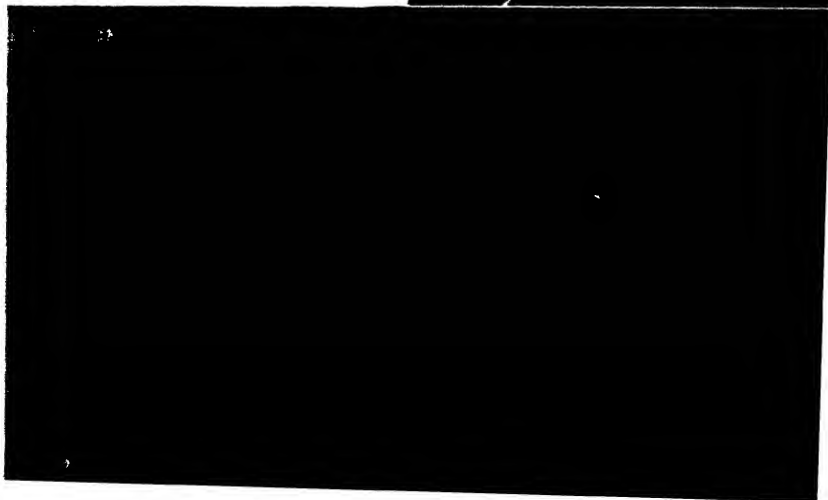
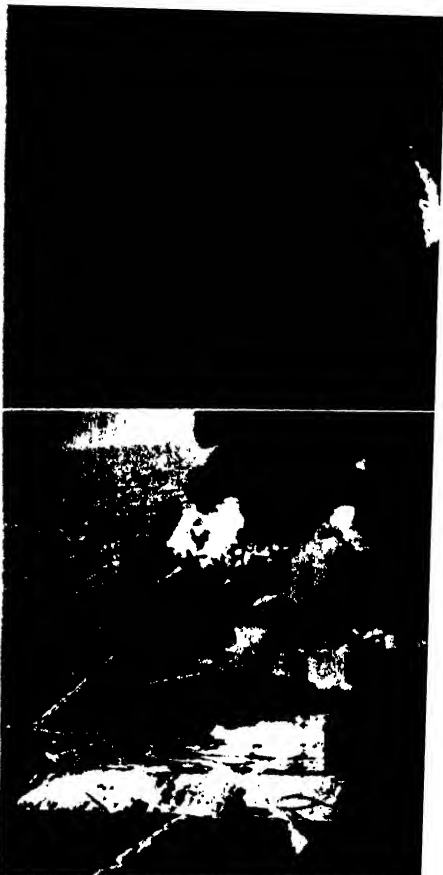
(lower) Flight deck ghost! His fluorescent clothing lit by ultra-violet light, the landing signal officer guides Navy night fighter pilots safely back to the USS HORNET during strikes on the Japanese homeland. (Painting by Lt. Comdr. Dwight C. Shepler, Official U.S. Navy Combat Artist.)



PLATE LI—(upper) Hit by proximity-fuse antiaircraft fire from a U.S. Navy carrier, an attacking Japanese dive bomber makes a bizarre aerial design as it explodes and plummets into the sea off the Ryukyus, March 18, 1945.

(center) For more than three years the USS SARATOGA led a charmed life, as far as enemy bomb hits were concerned. Then, off Iwo Jima, February 21, 1945, her luck ran out fast. The "Sara" took five Kamikazes in a row. No carrier ever absorbed so much punishment and survived. Here her crew battles several raging fires. The SARATOGA finally met a gallant end as a "guinea pig," in the atom bomb tests, at Bikini.

(lower) This is what a U.S. Navy pilot saw during a carrier-based raid on the great Japanese naval base of Kure, southern Honshu, March 18, 1945. Despite a murderous cone of flak, ships and dockyards were left smashed and burning. The planes came from Sherman's and Clark's carriers.



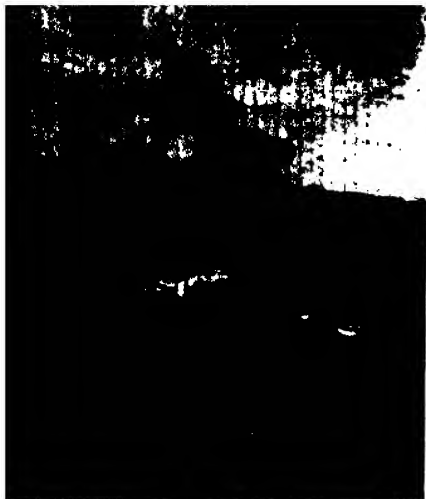


PLATE LII—Iwo Jima, strategic stepping stone on the aerial route to Japan, proved an extremely tough nut to crack. But, in American hands, it saved the lives of scores of flyers whose planes were damaged in raids on the Japanese homeland. And it paved the way for an early delivery of the atomic bomb!

(upper) U.S. Navy carrier-based dive bombers roar in low over Iwo Jima, adding their lethal punch to Marine riflemen battling over the rugged terrain.

(center) Hitting the ditch. A truckload of Japanese troops scatters as a strafing U.S. plane catches them on a back road at Iwo.



(lower) With precision born from scores of Pacific landings, small craft filled with Marines hit the black sand of Iwo Jima, February 19, 1945. Mount Suribachi, an extinct volcano (left center), smokes again from the heavy bombardment which it, and the adjacent shoreline (right), received from big guns of the bombardment fleet.



PLATE LIII—(upper) Closeup of the battering an LCI received during the fiercely-contested landing operations at Iwo Jima. Dead and wounded still lie on the deck, as another ship puts alongside to give aid.

(center) Everyone had his head down but the photographer! A beachhead focus of the Fourth Division Marines going ashore at Iwo in face of heavy crossfire from Japanese machine guns and mortars. Note the pall of acrid smoke and dust that choked lungs and seered vision throughout the operation. (Marine Corps Photo.)

(lower) Inch by inch, Fifth Division Marines crawl up the shifting black sand of "Red Beach One," Iwo Jima. "Digging in" was almost impossible. The dry volcanic sand flowed like liquid. This division advanced so rapidly, however, that it captured the end of Airfield No. 1 by noon of the first day.



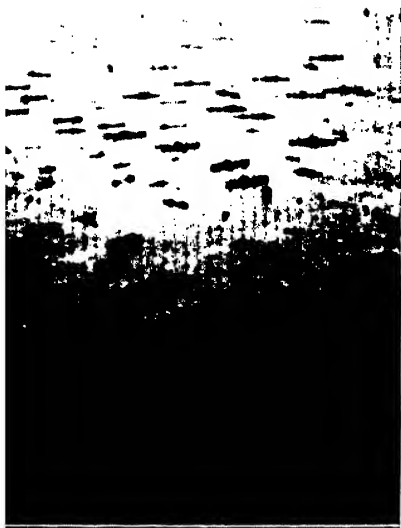
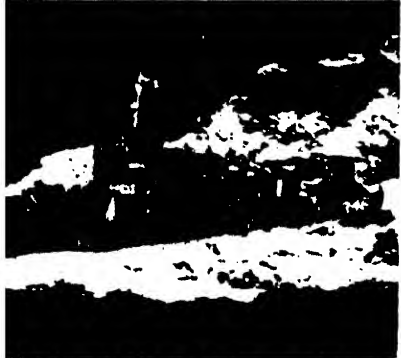


PLATE I.IV—(upper) Just a few of the more than 900 ships that made the capture of Iwo Jima possible. A monumental job of master-planning synchronized the arrival of these ships from a score of distant bases.



(center) To provide a speedier and more accurate transmission of news the Navy supplied a special "Press Boat," and set up radio facilities on the flagship. News and pictures of the Iwo battle reached the United States a few hours after the first Marines landed.

(lower) Devil's breath on Hell's island. Using flame throwers, two Marines throw a scorching inferno into the Japanese defenses ringing Mount Suribachi, whose code name, "Hot Rocks," proved grimly prophetic. This photograph reveals the type of rugged, desolate terrain through which the embattled Marines advanced foot by foot, using every weapon in the book. (Marine Corps Photo.)



PLATE LV—(upper) The Garbage of War. Japanese fire and storms played havoc with small landing craft at harborless Iwo, but not before they fulfilled their mission of landing Marines and supplies.

(center) Biting his tongue in pain, a bearded leatherneck's wounds are treated on Iwo Jima. Note the still unbandaged hole in his back.

(lower) Ensign Jane Kendiegh, first Navy flight nurse to set foot on a battlefield, comforts a badly wounded Marine on the Iwo Jima airstrip, March 6, 1945, only two weeks after the initial landing. U.S. casualties on Iwo were 22,082 (nearly 5,000 dead and missing), but 2,251 crippled super-forts, with crews totaling 24,761 men, were saved because Iwo offered them haven.





PLATE LVI—These three pictures offer one of the most dramatic photo sequences of World War II. They were taken from a North American B-25 of the 345th Bombing Group, the celebrated "Air Apaches," during an attack on a Japanese convoy near Amoy, China, April 6, 1945. (above left) Its snout striped with war paint, a B-25 makes an opening bomb run on a Japanese frigate. The splashes are from machine gun strafing of the covering plane from which the photograph was made.



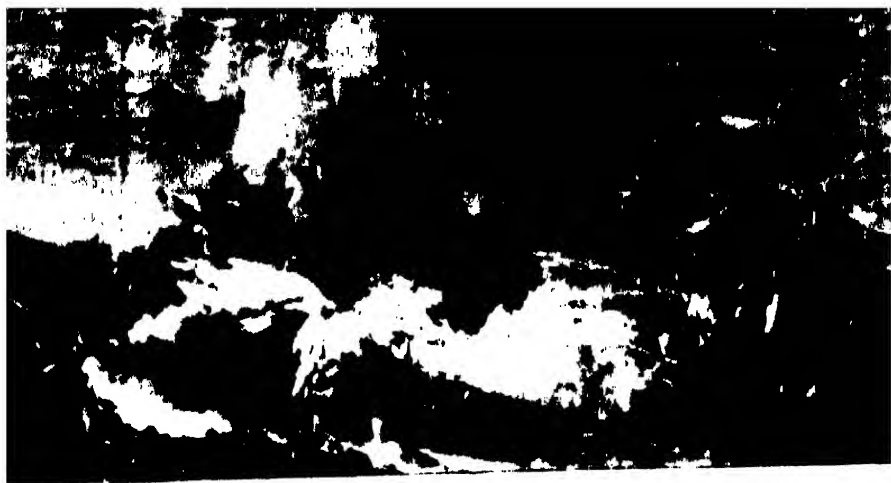


PLATE LVII—(above right) Wham! A direct bomb hit amidships causes the frigate to explode like a volcano, spouting debris and pieces of enemy personnel. (below, left and right) As the frigate keels over, panicky Japanese seamen crawl over the side to join shipmates who have already abandoned ship. Another frigate was sunk in the same attack. These Air Force operations supported Navy carrier strikes on similar objectives. (U.S. Air Force Photos.)





PLATE LVIII—Carriers can take it. The bomb-riddled ships on these two pages appear to be doomed, but their stout-hearted crews won heroic battles against seemingly impossible odds. Lawrence's immortal words, "Don't Give Up the Ship," were never better exemplified.

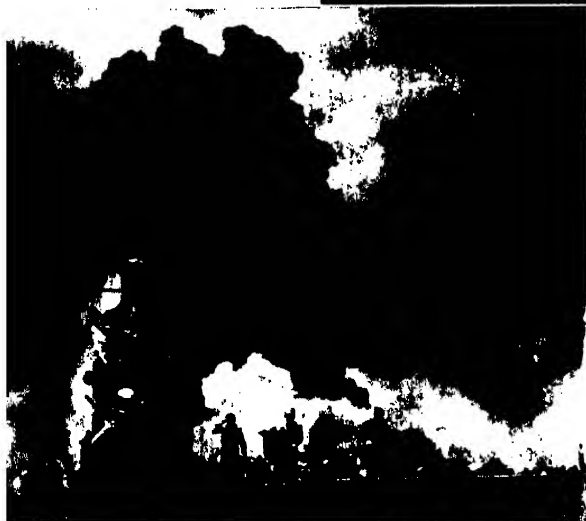
(upper) Listing heavily, the USS FRANKLIN fights back after a Japanese dive bomber has planted two 550-pound bombs aboard, both of which exploded, one after penetrating the hangar deck. The attack took place not far from the Japanese coast, March 19, 1945.



(center) Debris flies aloft as an explosion convulses the USS FRANKLIN. Violent blasts so rocked the 27,000-ton carrier that steel plating of surrounding ships reverberated. This photograph was taken from the cruiser SANTA FE, which removed many of the "Big Ben's" wounded. (lower) Gloved hands pressed together, Lt. Comdr. Joseph O'Callahan, Navy chaplain, administers last rites aboard the FRANKLIN. The carrier, suffered



PLATE LIX—In the big Kamikaze attack off Okinawa, May 11, 1945, the BUNKER HILL took a staggering sock on the chin. Boring through the destroyer screen and heavy ack-ack thrown up by the carrier itself, two Japanese suicide planes crashed into Vice Admiral Mitscher's flagship, killing 402 men, including 13 from the Admiral's staff.



(upper) Almost hidden in the dense smoke that followed the attack, the BUNKER HILL fights for her life. A destroyer races over to screen her windward side. Admiral Mitscher and a skeleton staff transferred by breeches buoy to the destroyer ENGLISH, for further transfer to the ENTERPRISE. (center) While an inferno rages aft, fire-fighters quickly bring hose lines to bear on flaming planes and exploding ammunition. Gun crews (left) calmly stick to their battle stations to ward off any further attacks.

(lower) Braving the threat of exploding ammunition and gasoline storage tanks, the light cruiser WILKES BARRE (left) pulls alongside to assist the BUNKER HILL. Fire hoses were swung out to help bring the raging flames under control. One of the war's most damaged ships, the BUNKER HILL returned to Puget Sound Navy Yard under its own power for repairs.





PLATE LX—For the conquest of Okinawa, key to the southern defenses of the Japanese homeland, a mighty armada of 1,457 ships, and a force of more than half a million men, were assembled from bases all over the Pacific.

(upper)
USS Tennessee
after a J
has placed
bombs and
exploded
trating
The attack
far from
March 1

(left) While battleships put a few finishing touches on enemy shore defenses, amphibious craft move up with the first waves of troops, April 1, 1945. The first group, 20,000 men, was twice the size of the first wave at Normandy. (right) "And the rockets' red glare" etches the early morning skyline. LSM(R)s add close-in fire support to Okinawa landing forces.



(left) In contrast to other important amphibious operations in the Pacific, troops went ashore at Okinawa standing up. Not a shot was fired by the enemy. But the situation soon changed—to one of the bloodiest, most costly campaigns of the war. Here troops and supplies move inland on D-day plus one, at Green Beach Two (Painting by Lt. Mitchell Jamieson, Official Navy Combat Artist.)

PLATE LXI—(right) Tense moment for the "Big Mo." Almost obscured in a hail of antiaircraft fire, a Japanese suicide plane (upper left) skims along the side of the MISSOURI off the western coast of Okinawa. It hit a gun turret a second later, causing minor damage and a few casualties.



(left) Rusting skeletons of a Japanese defense hope strewn the beach at Okinawa. The suicide boat, one of Japan's vaunted "secret weapons," proved an easy target for our guns and rockets. Nearly 400 of these strange craft were captured or destroyed at Okinawa alone.

(right) Over the transport area, off the western coast of Okinawa, Navy carrier planes spread a watchful air umbrella. The hospital ship stands out conspicuously among camouflaged vessels. Below the plane (center) can be seen the landing strip of Kadena airfield.





(upper)
USS Porter
after a
has played
bombs and
exploded
trating
The attack
far from
March 1

PLATE LXII—Only those who served in the Navy's "Radar Picket Stations," off Okinawa, realize the fury and horror of the last desperate Japanese attempts to annihilate the "fleet that came to stay." Kamikazes attacked in droves. The four pictures on these two pages depict the dramatic end of one of these gallant outpost ships, the destroyer WILLIAM D. PORTER. (above) Listing heavily after a Kamikaze hit, the PORTER awaits the arrival of the LCS 122, which rescued most of her crew. (below) Down by the stern, the PORTER begins to heel over.



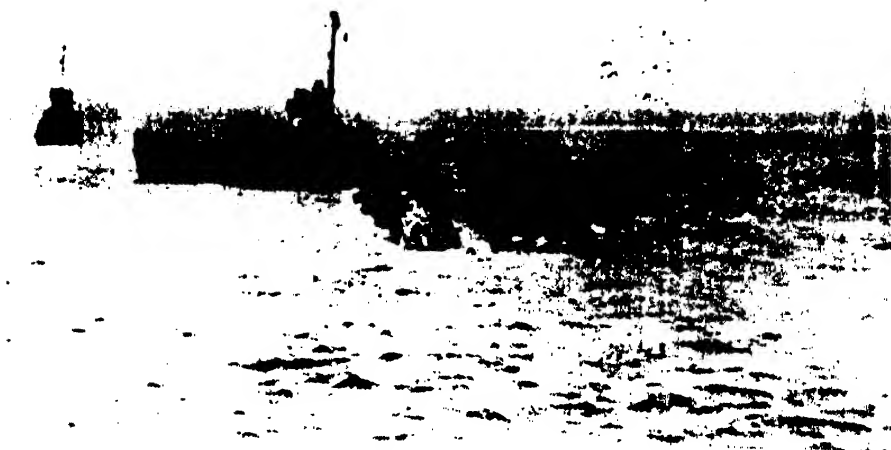
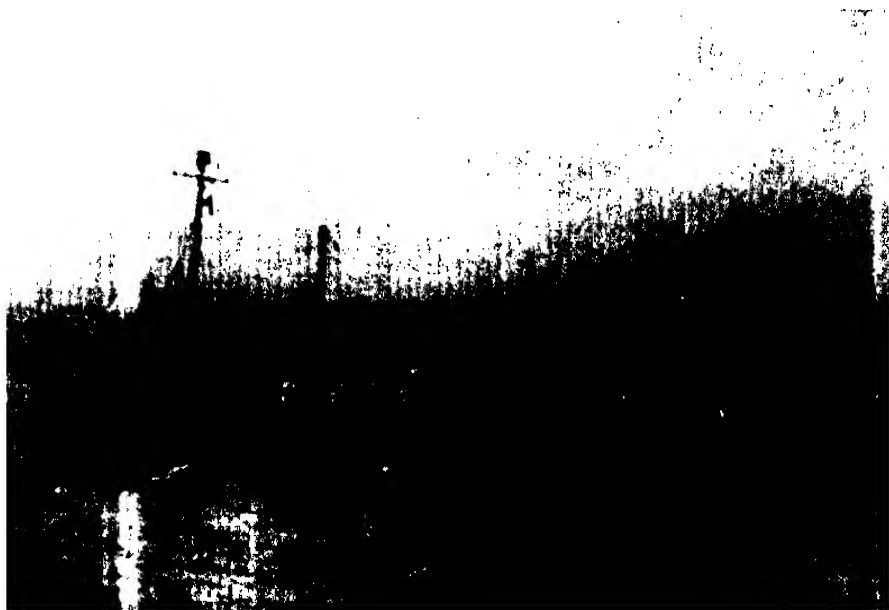


PLATE LXIII—(above) The LCS 122 pulls away from the stricken destroyer, which lies on her side momentarily before plunging into the depths. (below) While three other ships of the Picket Patrol hover nearby, the PORTER suddenly flings its bow into the air and slips down into "Davey Jones's Locker." The PORTER was one of a score of ships, large and small, lost or badly damaged in fierce offshore combat with Japanese suiciders off Okinawa. One, the destroyer MANNERT L. ABELE, was the first ship to be sunk by a "Baka"—the piloted glider bomb.



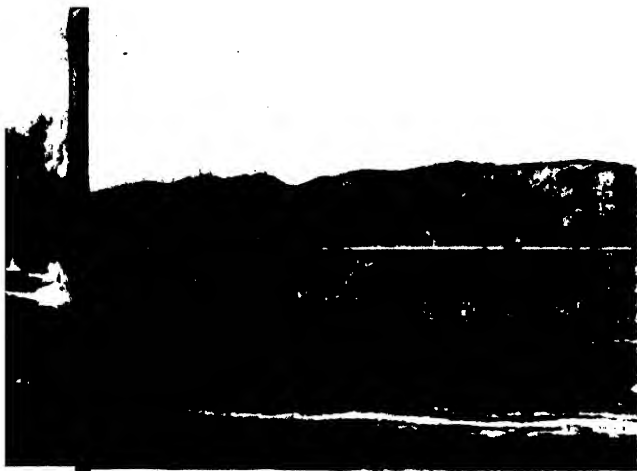


PLATE LXIV—How could they float: Watertight compartments often kept badly damaged ships afloat, even those sliced in half. (left) Half a ship, and much better than none! Twice hit by Japanese suicide planes at Okinawa, her bow blown off and forward hull twisted beyond recognition, the minelayer LINDSEY (right) limps back to port under her own power. A landing craft stands by.

(upper) USS *...* after a... has pla... bombs... explode... trating... The at... far from March

(center) This is not the mythical "Flying Dutchman," without crew or helmsman, but the stout ship HAZELWOOD, also a two-time victim of Kamikazes off Okinawa. Minus foremast and the bridge, and using steering gear aft, she returns to a West Coast port for repairs. The HAZELWOOD was hit April 29, 1945.



(left) The crew of the battleship PENNSYLVANIA seem to be treading water, so low is the big ship after a hit from a Japanese aerial torpedo off Okinawa, August 12, 1945. Heavy hoses were lowered through the muzzles of the 14-inch guns to reach flooded compartments. Soon damage control parties had the situation in hand.

over the hills, dipping down and fluttering about like butterflies over a clover patch. These were the small Piper Cubs that had been flown in to the short Keise Shima landing strip the day before from 150 miles out at sea, to hover now over the enemy and report his movements.

The early morning preparation had gone smoothly, but not wholly without opposition. At 0545 off the demonstration beaches the attack transport HINSDALE (Captain Edward F. Beyer) had been struck by either a mine or a torpedo, flooding the engine rooms. After HINSDALE's troops had been shifted to nearby transports and LSTs she was towed to Kerama Retto to take the first bed in what was to become a much-crowded hospital for ships.

Minutes later, LST 884 (Boatswain Charles C. Pearson) caught a suicide plane and burned brightly. After her troops and casualties were transferred, she, too, was towed to Kerama Retto.

At 6:00 A.M. the destroyer minelayer ADAMS (Commander George M. Price) took a Kamikaze on her stern, but was able to limp to Kerama Retto unassisted. Later WEST VIRGINIA (Captain Herbert V. Wiley) and the transport ALPINE (Commander George K. Reilly) were hit, both by suicide planes.

2

Bombardment began on schedule. Battleships, cruisers, and destroyers together punched for all they were worth. Once the Japanese punched back, but only once. A big coastal gun back of the city of Naha opened fire on ARKANSAS. The ARKANSAS spat back, but the shore guns outranged the old battleship. The MARYLAND, with greater range than either, stepped in to reverse the advantage and ended the argument with a couple of salvos.

At 0830 the first wave, 20,000 men, twice the size of the first wave at Normandy, landed abreast at Hagushi beaches, all standing up. Twenty thousand men, bayonets fixed, rattled the locks on Japan's basement door—no one answered.

It seemed incredible—no opposition. Most of the assault forces were composed of old campaigners in the III Amphibious Corps and the XXIV Army Corps combined into what was called the Tenth Army. They remembered the fury at Saipan, Guam, Peleliu, and the others. Maybe the Japs knew that it was "April Fool's Day." Perhaps they had

a trick up their kimono sleeves. Ships checked fire and searched for the enemy. Something was wrong—350 miles south of Japan and no Japs!

All the first day was mysteriously quiet. Marines from the 1st and 6th Divisions and soldiers from the 7th and 96th Divisions poured ashore, fanning out across the island to the east to envelop Yontan and Kadena airfields, where unguarded enemy planes stood on runways or in revetments. The planes weren't even booby-trapped. It was all very mysterious.

The perimeter on which the troops dug in at nightfall embraced 3 miles of shore line and ran inland for 2 miles. More than 50,000 troops and as many tons of supplies were crowded in those 6 square miles between "the devil and the deep blue sea."

For five days the land forces advanced. Major General Pedro Del Valle, desiring to put his 1st Marine Division across the island as quickly as possible, asked Colonel E. W. Snedeker if his 7th Marines could do the job. Snedeker replied, "Yes, we've got two days' rations on hand. I'll send Hunter Hurst."

"It was a little better than four miles to the east coast," recalls Lieutenant Colonel Hurst, "and we received our orders at 3:30 P.M. We had to make it by nightfall. We lit out cross country immediately. No roads, no paths, only a compass. We snagged about three or four Jap patrols and the head of the column made the march in three hours. We were far ahead of our own lines, but unworried. We knew they would soon catch up."

3

For the Fifth Fleet it was never easy at Okinawa, and for the Tenth Army, it was easy only for five days. Up to that time message after message had come from the front, "Encountering only feeble resistance." Then the troops came face to face with Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima's first defense line.

On April 4 a message came from the front, "resistance stiffening." On April 8 the report was "greatly increased resistance." On April 11 the troops failed to move at all. They were up against one of the best co-ordinated defense plans yet encountered in the Pacific.

Actually, they were where General Ushijima wanted them to be, if he had to have American visitors at all. His plan, instead of scattering forces to attempt an all-around defense of the ruggedly indented coast, had concentrated troops on the best defensive terrain the island afforded.

There, in elaborately prepared positions, behind double-apron barbed wire and minefields, inside caves, blockhouses, tombs, and pillboxes, the defenders had built up an "artful and fantastic" defense that made Iwo Jima a croquet court by comparison.

They were promised that if they would hold these positions until the Kamikazes destroyed or sent home the invaders' supporting ships, reinforcements from the nearby Home Islands would pour in and the savage Americans would be crushed.

Japanese strategy failed on just two counts: first, they couldn't sink or drive away the Fifth Fleet, and while the U.S. Navy controlled the seas it was inevitable that American troops would control the island. But no one who was there will question that the Japanese plan, however fanatically conceived, was zealously attempted and executed with great courage.

Of his 89,000 troops in the Ryukyus, Ushijima had placed 83,000 in southern Okinawa. In addition to this, the Japanese General had between 7,000 and 10,000 conscripted Okinawans to perform the noncombat labors of war; laborers, messengers, and home guards. As soldiers, the Okinawans were of very uneven quality. Mixed with the Japanese regulars, they usually fought well and bravely; left alone, they displayed no enthusiasm for defense of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and deserted or surrendered.

Too much faith in the Okinawa soldier was expensive for Ushijima at the very outset of the campaign and provided the invaders with a mystery they at first attributed to unfathomable Oriental subtlety. Ushijima had a very good idea of where U.S. forces were likely to land and wisely had not chosen to oppose the landing. He planned to make the Americans come to him, and come to him over scorched earth. Instead, they found no damage their own gunfire and bombing had not inflicted, including two intact airfields complete with planes.

There was nothing subtle, scheming, or baffling about it. The installations were to have been destroyed by a rearguard composed mainly of Okinawan conscripts. They were strictly expendable, so poorly organized and equipped that they were nicknamed "Bimbo Butai," or "Pauper Brigade." Without pride and certainly without incentive when the Bimbos saw the Japanese withdraw behind their minefields and barbed wire while American shells and bombs began to rain, they simply took to their heels and headed for the big thicket, never again to function as a unit.

Up north, Ushijima had not prepared elaborate defense. Only on Motobu Peninsula did parts of the 6th Marine Division run into stiff fighting. There, against about 1,200 die-hard Japs they engaged in a cave-man's war with mid-twentieth century weapons. In a welter of a thousand gully-creased, vine-laced hills, the Japanese had built a maze of caves, fox-holes, and trenches, cunningly devised to protect against anything except direct artillery hits—and United States Marines. The Marines went in after them with bayonets, hand grenades, and flame throwers. In seven days of hand-to-hand fighting, Motobu Peninsula was secured.

4

At this point a panoramic view of the setting for the largest campaign in the Pacific War will help make the story clearer not only to the reader, but to the narrator too.

Okinawa lies approximately in the center of the operational map. The battlelines ashore are drawn: the Marines are pushing rapidly to the north, the Army is driving somewhat more slowly and against much more rugged opposition to the south.

Spruance's fleet is well spread out. To the east of Okinawa, about 100 miles or so, steaming in an area 60 miles square is Mitscher's Task Force 58. These are the fast carriers and their escorts, 82 ships strong. In a position to send carrier planes against the Empire, Formosa, and the Nansei Shoto, Task Force 58 occupies a most strategic, although somewhat exposed area. The carriers are within easy range of Japanese land-based air. The big question: Can a carrier force surrender one of its greatest assets, mobility, and still compete against land-based aircraft, one-way Kamikazes at that?

Plying the waters east of northern Formosa, almost due south of Okinawa is the newly arrived British Pacific fleet, Task Force 57, composed of 4 carriers, 2 battleships, 4 light cruisers, and 11 destroyers. The mission of this task force is to neutralize Formosa and the Sakishima Gunto area.

To the southeast of Okinawa is Task Group 52.1, seventeen "jeeps," with such assignments as combat air patrol, antisubmarine patrol, and support of the ground troops. Besides augmenting Task Force 58 in all their Okinawa missions, these little work horses are subbing for the British fleet when the latter retires for refueling and replenishing.

Sprinkled around Okinawa in crazy-looking but calculated pattern are Turner's 1,200 ships of the amphibious force: transports, mine-sweepers, ammunition ships, cargo carriers, landing craft, cruisers, battle-ships, and barges, supplying and supporting the troops ashore.

Encircling the entire amphibious force and Okinawa in a perimeter averaging about 50 miles out is a ring of thin-skinned destroyers, the radar pickets, watchdogs for the operation. Through the use of the radar picket ships the central fighter director base expects to be able to intercept enemy planes shortly after they take off from Kyushu.

From Kyushu, in the Japanese homeland only 350 miles away, no helping hand has yet been stretched toward embattled Okinawa. Work is going on night and day to repair the airfields, railways, and roads from the pasting Task Force 58 had given them on March 18 and 19. But the Japanese high command is also waiting to determine approximately where and how the U.S. fleet is committed, and something about its plans for defense. Then the Divine Winds are to be loosed as no typhoon ever blew.

5

On April 6, 1945, the signal was given for hell to break loose, Japanese style. From Kyushu, 355 suicide planes headed in mass flight toward Okinawa, and from the Inland Sea what was left of the Japanese fleet made sortie on an identical do-and-die mission.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Men Versus Meteors

I

"RAID ONE. Bogeys closing from northwest, fifty miles north of Bolo. This is Delegate, out."

Thus began the fleet's stand at Okinawa.

"Delegate," central fighter director in the command ship *ELDORADO*, had just warned all the forces at sea that a heavy air raid was approaching from the Empire. "Bolo," was code for a peninsula labeled Zampa Point on the maps, selected as the Okinawa reference point for air-raid warning.

It was time to man the guns.

Delegate vectored all airborne fighters, approximately 50, toward the approaching raid via the most strategically situated radar picket ship. This dubious honor fell to the destroyer *BUSH* (Commander Rollin E. Westholm) on station Roger Peter One, in direct line with the oncoming attack.

2

On the Japanese calendar of events, this was a big day—a very big day. Vice Admiral Ugaki, over-all commander of the Special Attack Corps, was sending a mass impressive calling card, 355 Kamikazes, two-thirds of them Navy.

In countering the U.S. defense, Ugaki figured his best bet was first to sink the ring of picket ships that surrounded Okinawa, in the belief that after the tattletale radars were gone, his planes could get at the transports and carriers undetected.

That was what *USS BUSH* found she was up against as 40 of the skyful of Kamikazes broke formation and started to mill around the destroyer like Indians attacking a covered wagon.

3

Commander George R. Wilson,¹ whose ship, the destroyer COLHOUN, was just over the horizon to eastward of BUSH holding down Roger Peter Two, rode to the rescue.

"All of us on the picket line were tired. From about 3:30 A.M. to sunrise we had been under constant attack. Fortunately none of us had been hit and I don't believe we hit any of the planes. The harassing value, however, was such that the crew members were not at their physical peak when the heavy raid suddenly thundered down in the afternoon.

"Both BUSH and CASSIN YOUNG (Commander John W. Ailes III) on Roger Peter Three, 10 miles east, came under heavy attacks from the beginning. Soon a faint TBS message came through. 'Help, Help. Any station on this circuit, Help.' After that we heard no more. It was from BUSH; she had been hit.

"We set course for RP 1 and cranked on our best speed, well over 30 knots. Upon arrival we saw BUSH dead in the water, burning badly and helpless. Orbiting above her was a formation of Japanese planes apparently trying to decide if the sinking BUSH needed a few more whiffs of the 'divine wind.

"My intentions were, after driving off the enemy with the assistance of the 20 fighters sent to help us, to go alongside BUSH to fight fires.

"Unfortunately, the friendly fighters found so many Japanese planes to shoot at on their way up to us that they ran out of ammunition and never arrived. None came all afternoon.

"Apparently the Japanese decided we were a more worth-while target and needed a bit of attention. We splashed the first plane. The next attack, by three planes, was made a little differently. One came in on either bow and one on the quarter. We knocked down two but the third one hit our after fireroom and one engine slowing our speed considerably.

"The next attack was identical to the second and again one plane hit us, this time in the forward fireroom knocking out all power and even setting fire to the flags on the signal bridge.

"Using nothing but sheer human strength to move the gun mounts, the gun crews kept up a fair rate of fire at the next wave of attackers. It was not enough, however, and we were hit again, this time opening a

¹ Wilson commanded the destroyer CHEVALIER when she was sunk in the Solomons, October 6, 1943. See BATTLE REPORT, Volume III.

large hole on the starboard side causing the ship to assume a heavy list. Up to this time, we had been settling on a fairly even keel."

At last there were only two of the original 40 planes left. They both came in from starboard, two miles apart, strafing as they came. Each let go a bomb. One plane pulled out of his dive and headed for Tokyo, presumably to report to Ugaki; the other dived into the sinking BUSH.

At this point a stray enemy plane, not part of the original group, came along headed for home and trailing smoke. Unable to make it back to the Empire, the enemy plane crashed the COLHOUN pilothouse in a perfect dive.

"This completed the enemy action for the day as far as we were concerned" was the last entry in COLHOUN's log.

The BUSH, her innards serving as a funeral pyre for at least three Japanese pilots, slipped quietly out of sight shortly after sunset. The COLHOUN, only her bow above water, was sunk by a few shells from CASSIN YOUNG at midnight.

4

After two hours of fighting Delegate's voice sounded hoarse and tired.

"Raid number 37 . . . closing from northwest . . . This is Delegate, out."

It was two hours before dark in the transport area and approximately one-third of the suicide planes, well over 100, had sifted through to the beachhead.

The Marine Corsairs stood their ground, fought until they were out of bullets and gasoline, landed for replenishment, and returned to the fight. Aces were made in an hour as dogfights covered the haze-filled sky. The Japanese kept coming. Explosions were everywhere; ships firing, planes exploding in mid-air, on the sea and sometimes into ships, all stitched together in a crazy tapestry of noise by the steady rat-tat-tat of machine guns. Voice communications filled the circuits.

"Splash one Val raid 31. Out of ammo and returning to base," from a plane. "Request fighter protection . . . Have been hit twice . . . Request tug, medical assistance," from a ship.

Radio reports poured into Delegate: From the destroyer WITTER

(Lieutenant George Herrmann, III), "Received suicide hit starboard side. Am proceeding toward Kerama Retto."

From the destroyer minesweep RODMAN (Commander William H. Kirvan), fresh from the battles of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean: "We have just been hit in the forecastle by a suicide plane. Suffering heavily from fires and explosions."

From EMMONS (Lieutenant Commander Eugene N. Foss): "Flames from RODMAN are spreading. We are going alongside to render assistance."

Lieutenant John J. Griffin, Jr., watching from EMMONS' main battery director, describes the rest:

"At this time at least 50 bogeys were reported in our area, and dog-fights swarmed all over the sky. The enemy did not choose to engage in aerial combat. They seemed determined on crashing ships.

"While we were supporting the crippled RODMAN, we definitely shot down six before suffering the first of our own five suicide hits.

"The first plane hit the fantail and so did his bomb. The minesweeping gear was blown up over the afterstack and the fantail was missing. The second plane hit the pilothouse, starboard side, blowing the skipper clear into the water, where he was later rescued. The third hit the bridge portside.

"Flames were all around us," continued Griffin. "We had no communications and no further use of the director. So we abandoned it—how, I don't know. All of us, Lieutenant (jg) Ralph F. Merrill, Raymond M. Kiehl, Quentin E. Robinson, Harold R. Leistman and Harold Young, all six of us in that little director booth about five by five.

"The entire bridge area was completely destroyed. Fires raged all over the ship; ammunition exploded constantly, fire mains were so damaged they could not supply water and if they could, the fire hoses were useless since they had been holed in the strafing attacks; the ship was flooding forward and aft, there was imminent danger of explosion in both magazines and fuel tanks, the entire battery, except two little 20mms, was out of action, the Captain had been blown off the ship, the Executive Officer, Lieutenant Temple J. Lynds, was missing. I decided to abandon ship."

There wasn't much left of the EMMONS to abandon, but still she didn't go down. During the night her burned-out hull drifted toward the enemy-held Okinawa shore line and she had to be sunk by her sister ship, the ELLYSON.

5

More radio messages continued to flood Delegate.

From the destroyers HYMAN (Commander Charles A. Buchanan), ROOKS (Commander Robert F. Martin), and STERETT (Lieutenant Commander Gordon B. Williams), about five miles west of Ie Shima, came a cheering message. They had teamed up to down seven of the attacking multitude. An eighth enemy plane, however, swiftly destroyed exaltation, by crashing into HYMAN's torpedo battery and the flagship of Comdesdiv 126 (Captain Charles A. Buchanan) went up in fire.

Delegate ceased to report new raids. There were too many.

From the destroyer MULLANY (Commander Albert O. Momm): "We are badly hit. All of our fire-fighting equipment has been either destroyed or put out of commission. We must abandon ship."

From the destroyer HOWORTH (Commander Edward S. Burns): "Under heavy attack . . . downed five . . . more coming in . . ."

From the NEWCOMB (Commander Ira E. McMillan): "At least 40 in our vicinity . . . a well-co-ordinated attack . . ." Six Kamikazes already aboard.

From the LEUTZE (Commander Berton A. Robbins): "Standing by NEWCOMB . . . fighting fires . . . taking wounded aboard." Then the LEUTZE was holed at the waterline.

Around the radar scopes and radio receivers the ships' technicians sadly marked up the score for the amphibious force. It looked more and more impressive for the visiting team from Japan.

The MORRIS (Lieutenant Rexford V. Wheeler, Jr.), the little destroyer that had set a destroyer gunnery record in the Battle of Santa Cruz by downing eight Japanese planes, had her bow blown off.

LST 447 (Lieutenant Paul J. Schmitz), veteran of 28 Pacific combat missions, all the way from tiny Woodlark Island to Okinawa, was sunk with a full load of fuel.

The ammunition ship LOGAN VICTORY was struck by a flaming plane.

The minesweeper DEVASTATOR (Lieutenant William F. Remington) was holed above the waterline, but staying on station with remains of both the Japanese pilot and plane aboard.

The destroyer FIEBERLING (Commander Edward E. Lull) escaped with all her radars knocked off . . . and so on, and so on.

6

In such a wild melee of shooting, self-inflicted damage was inevitable. "Friendly" gunfire struck five transports, the AUDRAIN (Commander George O. Forrest), MENARD (Commander James B. Bliss), CATRON (Lieutenant Commander Donald MacInnes), BUTTE (Commander Joseph A. Gillis), and BARNETT (Captain Steward S. Reynolds), and PC 1390. Two of our own planes were caught in ships' line of fire.

"We didn't worry about any Japanese pilots mistaking our old beat-up barge for a shiny destroyer," said Jim Upton, a barge crewman who was transferring ammunition from LCVPs to alligators off Orange Beach, "but that falling flak gave us the jitters. If we had had a foxhole in which to crawl it would have been bad enough, but *that steel barge . . .* it was like trying to hide from an Oklahoma dust storm."

Friendly gunfire accounted for 4 soldiers killed and 34 wounded in the XXIV Corps zone. It ignited an ammunition dump near Kadena Airfield, and destroyed an oil barge.

7

Not all the yellow cloud of planes from Kyushu on April 6 went for the Okinawa area. One prong swerved eastward to strike at TF 58.

In addition to the radar picket stations surrounding Okinawa, a like barrier of destroyers watched sky and sea for Task Force 58. They were posted 40 miles off the flanks of the task force and that is about as close as the suicide squadrons got to the fast flat-tops.

The ESSEX fliers nearly broke the carrier record by shooting down a total of 65 planes. Another big score came from BELLEAU WOOD's (Captain William G. Tomlinson) Fighting 30.

While flying combat air patrol over the amphibious ships Fighting 30 knocked down a flock of 47 Kamikazes over the picket line. Making the highest score in the shoot was Ensign Carl Foster, who bagged 6 of the 47, to tie the mark made by Lieutenant Alexander Vraciu and Ensign Wilbur B. ("Spider") Webb in the "Marianas Turkey Shoot."¹

After Fighting 30 had landed, some wag chalked a couplet on the squadron blackboard:

Never fear—
When Foster is near—

¹ See BATTLE REPORT, Volume IV.

So pleased was BELLEAU WOOD's skipper that he sent a message to the flag: "Captain wants to know if this exceeds game limit."

Came the reply: "Negative, there is no game limit. This is open season! Well done."

That evening BELLEAU WOOD's weatherman, "Rainmaker" Lowell Riggs, issued a weather report: "Weak Japanese front approaching Okinawa this afternoon was broken up by converging F6Fs. Shatter to broken Japanese planes at 2,000 feet lowering to sea level. Large reduction in visibility was due to rising suns falling into Japanese current."

Thus in laughter the men of the Navy sought typically to unwind tense nerves, to make a joke out of horror that was past, the better to meet the horrors to come. In sober evaluation of the strange battle, there was nothing to laugh at. Approximately 400 enemy planes attacked, for the most part determined to elude air combat in order to crash-dive our ships. Of the 400, nearly 300 were stopped at the picket line at a cost of just two American planes. Only 24 managed to hurl themselves against ships, and two of those missed their marks by scant margin.

But each of the 22 Kamikaze pilots who rode to the Japanese Valhalla on the flames of self-immolation cost the lives of a score of Americans. Three destroyers were sunk, two ammunition ships demolished, one LST was lost. In addition, damage ranging from crippling to superficial was suffered by 22 vessels.

If the attack was an all-out attempt to soften the fleet for the Japanese warships known to have sortied from the Inland Sea, then there was cause for laughter, at that.

But if the day's fighting was the forecast of a Japanese determination to sacrifice every airplane, every pilot, in a sustained effort to destroy the United States fleet, then the future looked grim indeed. Not worse than grim; just that. Multiply the day's casualties by ten, arguing that the Japanese had 3,000 airplanes, 3,000 half-trained pilots to sacrifice. (Actually they had more than twice as many.) Fifty ships sunk, 200 damaged, 5,000 dead. The final outcome could not be prevented; Okinawa would fall, and the Allied fleet would steam into the harbor of a surrendered Tokyo, but at what cost.

Well, then, to hell with statistics and actuarial computations! Let the Japanese try their worst. It only meant the Americans would have to do better.

So ran the reasoning in wardroom, chart room, fo'c'stle, and ready

room. It was unrealistic optimism, unreasonable self-assurance. But the funny thing about it is, it worked.

8

Next day was more of the same. Among the ships sent to plug holes in the picket line was the destroyer BENNETT (Commander Jasper N. McDonald) ordered to Roger Peter One on which station BUSH and COLHOUN were lost. The BENNETT lasted till just after breakfast.

All of Admiral Turner's staff agreed that sending a destroyer to the picket line was the most difficult task of their naval career.

"We were picking the finest destroyers in the fleet and we were condemning them to death," said Captain Charles F. Horne, Jr., Turner's communicator.

"That's right," agreed Commodore Frederick Moosebrugger, whose job it was to keep the picket line operational. "It was very discouraging to see a sleek destroyer sail northward over the horizon, her engines and guns in perfect condition, her crew alive and spirited, and then within the space of a few hours see her towed back a mangled wreck."

It was even more discouraging to be aboard, according to BENNETT's tall, slender skipper, Commander McDonald.

"When we shifted to RP 1 from RP 3, our men were already worn out. It had been exactly 37 hours since our radar scope had been clear of enemy planes. Thirty-seven straight hours our men had been on battle stations.

"We had barely finished picking up survivors from BUSH and COLHOUN when we heard the voice of Delegate announce the first raid of the day. It hit us about 8:00 A.M. We visually sighted three Japanese planes with friendly fighters right behind. The friendlies got two, but they weren't having any luck with the third; they weren't making a kill. I radioed the friendlies:

" 'Pull off at 12,000 yards so we can open fire.' "

" 'Let us stay on to 5,000,' urged the Marine pilot confident he could make the kill.

" 'Affirmative.' "

"But the suicider came right on in. My bridge talker, Yeoman Hines, kept giving me the range, the tension in his voice growing tighter with each breath.

"Seven oh double oh Captain. . . . Five oh double oh Sir."

"Finally I picked up my voice transmitter and told the friendly plane to get clear, that we were opening fire, and we began blasting away.

"'Four oh double oh,'" continued Hines. "Three five double oh . . . three oh double oh.' Then suddenly the yeoman screamed wildly—'He's coming in—do something.' As if there was something I could do! It was like trying to dodge a fly. Although burning merrily, the plane, like a basketball player dribbling the length of court for a setup, came right on in tearing a big hunk out of BENNETT's side and opening her engine rooms to the sea."

Although BENNETT remained afloat to join the growing task force of cripples in Kerama Retto, she was too greatly damaged to see any more of the Okinawa picket line.

9

Meanwhile Delegate with his elaborate electronics devices was giving a good account of himself. Of the approximately 25 planes that came down April 7, 14 were shot down by the destroyer-controlled Combat Air Patrol. Six had been knocked down by ships' AA, with the battleship IDAHO (Captain Herbert J. Grassie) and the destroyers JEFFERS (Commander Byron D. Voegelin), LUCE (Commander Jack W. Waterhouse), WICKES (Lieutenant Commander James B. Cresap), GENDREAU (Commander Alfred D. Kilmartin), and BENNETT, all registering kills.

The most encouraging news of the day came from Yontan airstrip. Ninety Marine Corsairs and 7 night-fighting Hellcats had arrived to join the fight, making over 100 shore-based fighters available to Delegate—who could have used ten times that many.

The picket stations were rotated, primarily for replenishment but also to give the crews a chance to catch breath at less exposed posts.

On April 8 one of the many such reliefs was the destroyer GREGORY.

Commanded by Commander Bruce McCandless, she was ordered to relieve CASSIN YOUNG, one of the original radar picket destroyers which Admiral McCain had used with the fast carrier assault in the fall of 1944. The CASSIN YOUNG's skipper, Commander John W. Ailes, III, because of his several months' experience, probably knew more about radar picket duty than any of his contemporaries.

As GREGORY relieved CASSIN YOUNG, McCandless, who wore the Congressional Medal of Honor after taking charge of the mutilated cruiser

SAN FRANCISCO during the Battle of Guadalcanal, asked Ailes over the TBS for any helpful suggestions.

"Duck as fast as you can; make as much speed as you can; shoot as fast as you can," replied redheaded Ailes.

Next day CASSIN YOUNG was returning to picket station and met GREGORY limping back to Kerama Retto, a hole in her side as big as a boxcar.

"We didn't do nothin' fast enough," signaled McCandless in passing. But his ship had splashed two Kamikazes before a third smashed into her portside.

10

The attacks abated through April 9 and 10. That is to say, enemy planes were downed early by the CAP with only minor damage to Okinawa ships. But the pressure never let up.

(Early in the Okinawa joint planning, Admiral Turner had suggested that some smaller islands to the north should be taken first, for the installation of early-warning radars. When the idea was rejected after due debate, Turner set up the destroyer radar picket defense with what some thought overelaborate precaution.)

On April 11 the Japanese turned their fury on TF 58, but somehow the Japanese had telegraphed their punch. TF 58 was expecting them. All close support missions at Okinawa were abandoned; all torpedo planes and bombers were placed in the hangar decks, debombed and degassed. Twenty-four fighters were ordered over each task group and twelve fighters over the eight radar picket destroyers 25 miles to the northeastward. Okinawa forces were given 24 fighters to augment their own Corsairs. Still another 24 planes were disposed over Amami and Kikai, the islands approximately 100 miles to the northward of the fast carrier operating area. This large force of fighters was staggered in height for the purpose of giving defense in depth to both Okinawa and the task force.

A few Japanese single-engine fighters started off the afternoon action by playing hide-and-seek with the Hellcats among the clouds. The task groups were all steaming in tight anti-aircraft circular formation with individual ships bursting forth with gunfire each time one glimpsed a "meat ball."

The Japanese were ingenious enough in their tactics. They dropped "window"—aluminum foil—making it difficult for radars to pick up the moving targets. They used clouds and sun to screen their advances. But

the precaution taken by the fleet paid off. Not one of the Kamikazes found its mark, although eight near misses, all within 100 yards of their target, damaged the battleship *MISSOURI* (Captain William M. Callaghan), the carrier *ENTERPRISE* (Captain Grover B. H. Hall), and destroyer *KIDD* (Commander George H. Moore). By the end of the day the task force fighters had bagged 17 of the enemy, the ships had accounted for 12 more.

II

On the 12th the enemy shifted the weight of his attacks back to the ships at Okinawa. The same strong combat air patrols of the previous day were flown, with TF 58's carrier-based planes staging quite a field day. They alone shot down 151 of the enemy, more than five times the previous day's score.

But the Kamikazes improved their record by an even wider margin. They sank the destroyer *MANNERT L. ABELE* (Commander Alton E. Parker) and the LCS 33 (Lieutenant Carroll J. Boone); they solidly smashed into three battleships, *IDAHO*, *NEW MEXICO* (Captain John M. Haines), and *TENNESSEE* (Captain John B. Heffernan); they seriously damaged six destroyer types, the *JEFFERS*, *LINDSEY* (Commander Thomas E. Chambers), *ZELLARS*, *STANLY* (Commander John B. Morland), *PURDY* (Commander Frank L. Johnson), and *CASSIN YOUNG*; three destroyer escorts, *RALL* (Commander Herman Reich), *RIDDLE* (Lieutenant Commander Francis P. Steel), and *WHITEHURST* (Lieutenant Jack C. Horton), and the LCS 57 (Lieutenant (jg) Harry L. Smith). Nine additional ships suffered minor damage.

The *MANNERT L. ABELE*, stationed at RP 14, 72 miles northwest of Bolo, was the first ship to be sunk by a "Baka"—the humanly piloted glider bomb. She was simultaneously attacked by three diving planes while a dozen more feinted at Commander A. E. Parker's destroyer just out of gun range. The ship was struck by one Kamikaze in the engine room, breaking the keel. As she lay dead in the water, an incredible object winged silently out of the sky, a pudgy stub-winged thing too small to be an airplane, too big to be a bomb. Only four 20mm gunners had time to open fire before the Baka's 1,800 pounds of explosives (and 100 pounds of pilot) crashed into the destroyer's side just beneath the forward stack. The ship immediately broke in two and sank, taking 81 of her crew with her.

In such a short period of time it seems incredible that any men trapped below could be rescued. Yet, here's what happened in a matter of seconds. Lieutenant George L. Way was blown overboard. He instinctively grabbed a line dangling from a forward boat davit and hauled himself aboard the sinking ship. Dazed, he started forward on the portside when he noticed the wheel controlling the "dogs," or latches, on the engine-room hatch being turned. Way saw that the hatch was sprung and a lower dog was binding it. With the assistance of Electrician's Mate Henry S. Paulman, he broke the bent latch and ten half-drowned men crowded out of the flooded forward engine room to the shattered deck, among them the ABELE's Chief Engineer, Lieutenant J. J. Hoblitzell, III. The next instant they found themselves in the water, as the ship went down.

All were saved except one of the men to whom they owed their lives. A Japanese plane dropped a bomb on the swimmers, killing Paulman.

The destroyer minesweep JEFFERS (Commander Hugh Q. Murray) was running north at flank speed to ABELE's rescue when one of the look-outs spotted a Betty circling at about 6 miles.

Murray swung ship to unmask his batteries and cut loose as the big bomber turned and flew down the destroyer's beam. The Betty suddenly winged up, exposing its shiny belly for an instant. Seconds later, a silvery object, first thought to be a belly tank, or large torpedo, appeared to be dropping ahead of the bomber.

As the Betty's range opened, the silver-looking object disappeared in the sun. Suddenly the radar picked up a new target coming from approximately the same bearing as where the silvery object had disappeared.

"Open fire," yelled Murray—as all guns opened up on what looked like a miniature fighter, chunky and streamlined. It came in so fast that radar operators couldn't keep the pip on their range scope. It must have been making more than 500 knots.

At the very last second the silver streak fell before the destroyer's guns, 50 yards on the port quarter.

Thus was the U.S. Navy introduced to the Baka, first detected in photographs of the aerial engagement astern of TF 58 on March 21. The Japanese called it "Oka" for cherry blossoms; symbol of hope. The Americans called it "Baka" for foolish. The American sobriquet was the more accurate. Not more than 50 out of the 800 that had been manufactured were to be actually launched, and only 3 were to be credited with hits.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Battleship Banzai

I

IN CHARTING his defense plan, Admiral Spruance allowed for the dubious possibility that the Japanese might try fast surface raids on the invasion fleet at Okinawa. So, in addition to maintaining a clock-around air watch of the sea approaches, he placed a network of submarines to guard the southern gates of the Inland Sea.

Certainly any scheme the Japanese might concoct at all to raid Okinawa shipping would be a desperate gamble. But Japan was in desperate straits. Camphor and pine oil, even fish oil, were being used as substitutes for petroleum. The people were mixing sawdust with their rice—red pine was deemed the tastiest. The Imperial air forces by necessity had resorted to suicide. Japan was closely besieged, cut off from her continental supplies by the American submarines, her industries pounded to scorched rubble by the Flying Fortresses. The end of the war was inexorably approaching.

The way of the Samurai is not to wait for the inevitable but to go forth, sword in hand, to meet it.

2

No one knew Japan's plight better than Admiral Soemu Toyoda, Commander in Chief of the Imperial Combined Fleets—"combined" because there was not enough left of them to warrant otherwise.

Toyoda had never been optimistic about a war with the United States. He made no secret of his disgust with the Army, which he blamed for precipitating the conflict out of an inspiration composed equally of overestimating its own strength and underestimating America's. But Toyoda was also a loyal servant of the Emperor, and, once committed to the war, he was determined to do his best to win it, and, failing the impossible, to lose gloriously and to make the victor pay extravagantly.

Now he knew that he could not even achieve the alternative, but at least he did not have to see his fleet perish ingloriously.

He commandeered every drop of fuel oil that could be transported to Tokuyama Bay. By draining every storage tank, a respectable 2,500 tons was assembled as word came from Okinawa that the Americans were ashore.

Two thousand five hundred tons of petroleum: the United States fleet burned more than that every hour. Toyoda made his computations. Then he rubbed his brush on the ink cake, and carefully, thoughtfully, wrote a directive.

3

At 3:00 P.M., April 5, 1945, recently promoted Vice Admiral Seiichi Ito, IJN, received Dispatch Order No. 607 from Cinc Combined Fleet Admiral Toyoda. Admiral Ito, relaxing in his cabin aboard his flagship YAMATO, swinging at anchor in Tokuyama Bay, had, as was his afternoon custom, just sent a steward for a cup of tea. Calmly Ito moved his black-rimmed bifocals closer to his eyes and read the message handed to him by a radioman. The message was short:

Operation "Ten-Ichi"

The First Diversion Attack Force will sortie from the Inland Sea on 6 April 1945 and carry out a surface attack on United States Forces at Okinawa. The attack is scheduled at dawn, 8 April.

Ito read the message again to make sure of the schedule, handed it to the radioman for staff routing, and relaxed again for a moment to sip his tea and think about the past, feeling reasonably certain that his future was fairly well set forth in the dispatch. Ito had lived a full life. Some thirty years in the Imperial Japanese Navy had enabled him to travel extensively, know many people, and know something about the world too. He was in full accord with his boss, Toyoda, that the Japanese Navy should never have tackled the United States Navy in the first place. Now it was his duty to tackle the United States Navy in the last place, and he wryly murmured an ancient adage: "Do not uncover the teapot and release the typhoon." He switched on his radio for a 4:00 P.M. Tokyo news summary, only to hear fabulous claims of Japanese successes at Okinawa.

"Sa-a-a!" said Ito, with a sigh, as he gulped down what remained of his tea and summoned his aides for conference.

For "Ten-Ichi" operation, Ito had 9 ships: his flagship, the YAMATO, the light cruiser YAHAGI, and 8 destroyers: FUYUTSUKI, SUZUTSUKI, ISOKAZE, HAMAKAZE, YUKIKAZE, ASASHIMO, HATSUSHIMO, and KASUMI. He could have had many more surface ships had there been more fuel. Nine ships weren't sufficient for even a successful suicide mission; Ito knew that, but he would do his best.

A suicide mission for YAMATO—Ito tried but couldn't fully comprehend that assignment. The 67,500-ton monster with its batteries of 18.1-inch guns was the biggest warship ever built—and Japan had built it secretly, at that. It was to be the symbol of Japan's supremacy, not only on the sea, but over the races of mankind.

For not only was the YAMATO the pride of the Imperial Fleet, she was the bearer of the name held sacred as the original name of the Japanese people. When the gods separated the land from the waters, the first soil they shaped was the ancient province of Yamato, from which the early people took their name. If the ship was lost in the forthcoming battle, more than a symbol of sea power would be destroyed, more than the material physical strength of Japan would be depleted.

4

By April 6 YAMATO had fueled to 90 per cent capacity. She had taken aboard a full load of ammunition, including fused AA projectiles for 18.1-inch guns, one burst from which should disintegrate an enemy plane 20 miles away. She had a veteran crew of nearly 2,500 officers and men whose morale was high, despite the gloomy war picture.

After having lit off boilers shortly before noon, Ito's squadron steamed out of Tokuyama Harbor into the Inland Sea, Okinawa bound. It was 3:20 P.M., April 6. Hardly were they underway when, according to Commander T. Miyamoto, a survivor from Admiral Ito's staff, a group of B-29s winged over high, too high to notice any activity in the Inland Sea. The ships steamed south through the Bungo Channel east of Kyushu undetected. Undetected, that is, for a total of three hours. Then two U.S. submarines, THREADFIN (Commander John J. Foote) and HACKLEBACK (Lieutenant Commander Frederick E. Janney), on guard duty for Admiral Spruance, made visual contact.

"At least one battleship . . . supporting destroyers . . . course one nine zero" was the warning they flashed south.

Ito's force, alert itself, intercepted the submarine's coded radio report. The Japanese weren't sure of the contents, but had a good idea. Nevertheless, on with the mission!

Spruance was satisfied that the Japanese intended to raid Okinawa, and decided to let them steam southward before attacking—sufficiently southward at least to nab them before they could possibly retreat into the Inland Sea. Then he had a second thought. Suppose the enemy might not be heading for Okinawa, but rather the naval base at Sasebo on Kyushu's west coast? Time was wasting. Begin the search!

Forty fighter planes in units of four roared off the fast carriers' decks during morning twilight of April 7 to search a wide, pie-slice quadrant, covering any possible course that the enemy might have chosen during the night. In order to move TF 58's airstrips closer to the enemy, the carriers had turned northeastward about 4:00 A.M., an hour before the search was launched.

Ito was heading as straight for Okinawa as the volcanic peaks of the Ryukyus and the general operating area of Task Force 58 would permit. He had passed through Bungo Strait about dusk. At 6:00 P.M. one-third of YAMATO's crew was sent to battle stations while the remainder slept nearby. The night passed uneventfully and a speed of 20 knots was maintained.

On the morning of the 7th breakfast was completed in all the Japanese ships by 7:00 A.M. Three hours later the first uncertain radar contact was made with U.S. planes.

Ito ordered all ships to prepare to go to general quarters. Not an instant too soon either. A few minutes later U.S. PBMs were actually sighted. Ito sounded general quarters.

The YAMATO was buttoned up completely, all doors, hatches, and ventilation closures tightly shut. Even the escape scuttles in the lower portion of the vertical watertight doors, a characteristic on all Japanese warships, were tightly dogged. It took her repair parties 7 minutes to get set for battle, but YAMATO was now ready in every respect.

All Ito's ships were ready for action—as ready as they could get without air cover. They never had more than five land-based planes for cover—none after ten in the morning.

Whether the Japanese intended to fight, feint, or retire made little difference to Admiral Spruance now.

5

An ESSEX Hellcat flown by Ensign Jack Lyons had found them within range. It was 8:22 A.M. "One YAMATO-class battleship, one or two cruisers and eight destroyers . . ."

"Pilots, man your planes!"

Avengers, loaded with torpedoes; Helldivers, with semiarmor-piercing bombs, and the fighters with 500-pound bombs took off at 10:00 A.M. The entire striking force of Task Groups 58.1 and 58.3 was aloft. Task Group 58.4 followed 45 minutes later. In all 386 planes streaked northward.

"But," said a bewildered British observer, "you have launched before you can possibly be sure of their location."

Quick to reply, Commodore Arleigh Burke of Mitscher's staff said, "We are taking a chance; we are launching against the spot where we would be if we were the YAMATO."

Ito's ships were kept under constant observation all morning long by Kerama Retto-based PBMs. So annoyed was Ito that he opened fire with main and auxiliary batteries on the pestering awkward-looking flying boats. Unimpressed, the PBMs merely ducked into a cloud and waited for Ito to pipe down, which he did in less than a minute. He had to save ammunition for ships later, if not Grummans sooner. If not Grummans sooner was right.

Planes from two task groups of 58 were closing fast. Lieutenant Thaddeus T. Coleman tells what happened: "It was a dull flight and as usual nothing to do. I smoked and then smoked some more; chewed a couple of packages of gum and finally began to count planes. We were in such a compact formation that it was easy . . . 50, 75 . . . 150 . . . 200 . . . 250, and I quit counting. It wasn't safe. I had just turned to count the planes to my right and saw an F4U (Corsair) spin dizzily out of a cloud, his tail assembly clipped away by collision. I quit counting.

"We looked like a giant crop of blackbirds hunting for Farmer Ito's granary. The hunting got tougher and tougher. Rain and more rain. Clouds and more clouds. At last one of the bomber pilots radioed, 'I've got 'em on my radar.' That would have been a great help had we been attacking by radar, but we weren't. Eventually it was like swimming through soup, we couldn't see a thing, not even the formation in front of us.

"Then another bomber pilot radioed, 'I'm over the target location, where are the Japs?'"

"That was the last communication that I remember. Slowly our radios had developed a whining sound which grew worse and worse until they were like fire sirens fastened to our heads. Now we could neither see nor hear. It was like a football game of the deaf and blind. The Japanese had jammed our voice communications. Commander Harmon T. Utter, Air Group Co-ordinator, was helpless. He couldn't co-ordinate anything. He couldn't see or hear.

"There was a sudden eruption of AA close ahead. Then we knew we had found them and, because of their bursts, we knew where they were.

"Naturally we scattered, to begin the most confusing air-sea battle of all time. The Japanese gunnery officers were handicapped because they didn't have the slightest idea from where the next attack would develop. Nor did we, the attackers, for that matter.

"Our training instructions, to dive steeply from 10,000 feet or higher, proved useless. Here the ceiling was only 3,000 feet, with rain squalls all around. Bomber pilots pushed over in all sorts of crazy dives, fighter pilots used every maneuver in the book, torpedo pilots stuck their necks all the way out, dropped right down on the surface and delivered their parcels so near the ships that many of them missed the ships' superstructures by inches.

"The Japanese ships squirmed like a nest of snakes. The light cruiser skipper steamed courageously away from the main body in a deliberate attempt to divert the attackers in his direction—away from the beloved YAMATO. He succeeded in getting himself expeditiously knocked out."

6

One group of torpedo planes scored several hits on one side of the battleship, causing her to list heavily to port. Then, a few moments later, planes from the opposite side scored equally as many hits, and the heel to starboard put her on an even keel. It is doubtful if damage-control officers aboard YAMATO could have done as well.

Exact assessment of damage was impossible as the first air groups pulled away: YAMATO and YAHAGI were heavily hit; two destroyers were positively sunk.

To the YAMATO, as survivors later related, the first strike came in two

big waves. The first scored four bomb hits in the vicinity of No. 3 turret, just aft of the bridge, and two or three torpedo hits on the port side. The bombs started a fire which was never extinguished.

The second wave of planes scored at least four torpedo hits, three to port and one on the starboard. The YAMATO took a 15-degree list to port, which required counterflooding of all remaining starboard voids, and her speed was reduced from 28 knots to not more than 18.

When the second strike arrived, TG 58.4's 48 Hellcats, 25 Helldivers, and 53 Avengers, about an hour after the first strike, YAMATO was still shooting and still fighting mad. The cruiser YAHAGI had no way on, and was spewing what remained of her precious oil. One of the destroyers burned fiercely and was trailing oil.

Greatly reduced antiaircraft fire met the second strike. The weather had become worse but voice communications were improved since most of the Japanese radio countermeasures had been silenced.

The YAHAGI, who had chosen to fight alone, was first to be pulverized. After taking at least a dozen bombs and nearly as many torpedoes, she gave up and went down at 2:05 P.M., after 105 minutes of fighting.

How much punishment could YAMATO take? Air Group 10, Commander John J. Hyland from INTREPID, swarmed in, connecting at least one torpedo and eight bombs. The YAMATO reeled under the impact, zigged wildly, cutting crazy patterns in the debris-covered water. Then came the final blow—six YORKTOWN "torpeckers."

Lieutenant Thomas H. Stetson, Comtorpron 9, leading the attack, took a quick estimate of the situation. The YAMATO listed heavily to port. Her massive armor belt on the starboard side could be seen high out of the water, exposing her more vulnerable underbelly.

"Hit her in the belly—now!"

As he brought his sextet around to YAMATO's high side, the starboard, Stetson instructed all pilots and crewmen:

"Lower torpedo depth setting from 10 to 20 feet."

Enemy radars were so cluttered with milling fighters and bombers that the "torpeckers" sped in undetected, their props cutting ripples in the water.

All six planes made perfect runs; so did at least five of the torpedoes. Her bottom ripped out, pushed over by the tremendous force of the underwater explosions, YAMATO slowly rolled on her beam ends. Billowing sheets of steam, flame, and spray veiled YAMATO's departure as completely

as had the yellow curtain of Japanese security veiled her commissioning ceremonies December 17, 1941, in the Kure Navy Yard.

The YAMATO had lived six months longer than her sister ship MUSASHI, lost in the Battle for Leyte Gulf. Her career had been active, if not successful. She had survived a torpedo from the U.S. submarine SKATE north of Truk in December, 1943, and three bomb hits in the Battle for Leyte Gulf.

7

Nearly all aboard YAMATO went down with her, among them Vice Admiral Ito. His chief of staff, who had been standing on the eighth level of pagoda tower, was trapped and carried several feet beneath the surface, where he lost consciousness. He later bobbed to the surface, was picked up by the destroyer FUYUTSUKI, and was one of the 280 who survived.

But the fight had not ended according to the battle log of Japan's 2nd Destroyer Squadron, although the rest must be considered somewhat anticlimactic.

1417—YAMATO blew up and sank.

1430—SUZUTSUKI burning.

1440—Enemy planes left after strafing survivors of YAHAGI and HAMAKAZE.

1450—FUYUTSUKI, HATSUSHIMO, and YUKIKAZE started to pick up survivors.

1505—Two enemy PBMs searching for and picking up fallen enemy flying personnel.

1524—FUYUTSUKI firing at PBM.

1657—KASUMI sunk.

2240—ISOKAZE scuttled (unable to make further retreat).

The log for the next day April 8 finished the laconic Japanese version of the battle:

0845—FUYUTSUKI arrived Sasebo, Japan.

1000—HATSUSHIMO and YUKIKAZE arrived Sasebo, Japan.

1430—SUZUTSUKI arrived Sasebo, entered Drydock No. 7 badly damaged.

Battle Results: At least 19 U.S. planes shot down. YAMATO, YAHAGI, ISOKAZE, KASUMI, and HAMAKAZE sunk. ASASHIMO not heard from, probably sunk.

The damage estimated done to "the enemy" was a little overoptimistic, as is usually the case, regardless of which side makes the claims. Of the 386 U.S. planes participating, 4 dive bombers, 3 torpedo planes, and 3

fighters were shot down, from which all but four pilots and eight crewmen were rescued.

While Mitscher's planes were still away on the YAMATO strike, the Japanese resumed heavy suicide assaults of April 6 against the fast carrier forces. Eighteen planes were shot down that day over the carriers by the combat air patrol and three by ships' gunfire.

At a quarter past noon a lone Japanese pilot dropped a bomb on HANCOCK (Captain Robert F. Hickey) and the blast of the exploding bomb cartwheeled the still airborne plane into several parked Hellcats on the after end of the flight deck. Heavy black smoke poured out in such quantities that HANCOCK was completely covered until Captain Hickey maneuvered to bring the heavy fires to leeward. Although seriously damaged, HANCOCK landed her own planes when they returned from the YAMATO strike at 4:30 P.M.

For TF 58 the excitement was over but not so with Admiral Turner's surface force, Rear Admiral Morton L. Deyo in charge, of two old battleship divisions, two cruiser divisions, and twenty destroyers. Deyo was still charging northward, his plan to interpose himself between the Japanese forces and the U.S. transports, destroying YAMATO's escorts and then getting to the battleship with destroyer torpedoes and gunfire as the opportunity permitted.

Deyo expressed disappointment when he got the news from TF 58 that the enemy force had been sunk, its remnant routed.

His destroyer screen was just as happy to call the whole thing off. They had enough to worry about.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Seventy-nine Minutes on the Picket Line

I

IN TELLING WHAT HAPPENED on the destroyer picket line on April 6, April 12, or April 16th, or any other day; what happened aboard the ABELE, BUSH, BENNETT, NEWCOMB, or the LCS 57 when all the suiciders crashed, something more than a blow-by-blow description of actual battle is needed if for no other reason than to record how a man feels who has been to hell and back again. One of this volume's authors, Lieutenant Commander Frank A. Manson, who was communications officer of USS LAFFEY, here tells of his brief, bloody vigil on Roger Peter One.

2

"Let's begin with the end, for invariably in retrospect victory in battle is thought of in terms of the price paid to win. Especially so, if the price includes a son, father, or shipmate.

"It was 2:00 P.M., April 17, 1945. A topless dusty brown Army truck bounced down a red-clay Okinawan lane. In the ditches on either side of the road, tiny, wrinkled, dirty, half-clothed natives trudged along looking for food or a hole in which to crawl should shells start falling again. This particular lane's roadbed, winding around to the 6th Marine Division Cemetery, located on the western side of Okinawa overlooking the transport anchorage, was well hardened and seemingly more traveled than many others. This Army truck, like the dozens of others that passed each day, was taking more of the fallen to a place of rest, carrying sufficient dead to tie up all the funeral homes in a city the size of Boston.

"In the truck's front seat sat the driver, an Army corporal, and two naval officers, a lieutenant from the destroyer whose dead lay in the truck, and the other a chaplain, Lieutenant Curt W. Junker, from Admiral Turner's flagship ELDORADO.

"In the rear of the truck, wrapped in dark-green flashproof mattress covers, lay the dead. All of them from one destroyer that had been knocked off the radar picket line by the Kamikaze.

"'Can't figure where all these stiff's are comin' from,' said the corporal, obviously trying to break the uncomfortable silence. No one had spoken since the bodies had been transferred to the truck from an LCVP at Yellow Beach.

"'But ya know I've been on this island almost three weeks and ain't even seen a Nip plane. Beats me—all these stiff's comin' in from our boats at sea, and no planes. Somebody said our boats wuz catchin' hell out sight of land, way up north some place.' Nodding understandingly, Chaplain Junker continued to look at the little Okinawans walking and crawling alongside the road. The Lieutenant made no reply. He hadn't heard the driver, hadn't seen the Okinawans—he was trying to forget. Trying to forget about the radar picket line and the destroyer Navy, the loss of thousands of shipmates and dozens of ships. Why not send the cruisers to the picket line; they could take more punishment. Why not the battleship; she could never be sunk. Or even better, why not unload the supply ships quickly and clear the area? Why pick on the destroyer? How about a dummy ship, a concrete barge? Anything for a change, anything but destroyers. He hoped the United States Navy had more destroyers than the Japanese had Kamikazes.

"'Yes, yes, those "boats" are having quite a struggle, Mr.—er—ah.'

"'Just call me soldier,' broke in the driver.

"The big Army truck slid to a stop at the 6th Marine Division Cemetery.

"'Did you ever see so many stiff's?' marveled the soldier. 'Just look. Don't even have time to cover 'em up.'

"A haggard, bone-weary officer approached and introduced himself as Chaplain, Lieutenant Commander Paul L. Redmond.

"'More Navy,' he said, in statement rather than question. 'At Guadal, Saipan, Peleliu, and Iwo it was mostly Marines, but here it's Marines and the Navy too.

"'Driver, lay them alongside the fourth column.' The padre pointed toward four long columns of the shrouded dead. Hundreds of them. The toiling burial detail, instructed to keep 100 graves ahead, was more than that number behind.

"The 6th Marine Cemetery seemed quiet and peaceful except for an occasional sharp crack of artillery or the dry snap of a sniper's rifle.

" 'Could you help me with a few prayers, Chaplain Junker?' asked tired Padre Redmond, as the work on the graves was resumed. The bulldozer operator, in his converted gravedigger, pushed slowly ahead with his massive steel blade, audibly hating his job more and more—more than if he were on the front being shot at, he declared to nobody in particular.

"Suddenly, 'Flash Red!' and all hands scattered for foxholes, not so much to escape the Japanese planes, which probably weren't coming near them anyhow, but to dodge the murderous shell fragments soon from the ship in the harbor.

" 'Flash White!' The shooting ended almost as abruptly as it had begun and hardly before the truck driver had found a pit to ditch himself.

" 'Why didn't you jump in one of the graves with me,' asked Redmond upon the driver's return from his foxhole. 'You know you could have been hit before you reached that ditch.'

" 'Grave? Ugh, I'd ruther be killed than use one of them graves,' returned the driver, shuddering.

"It was time to bury the dead. Empty sake bottles containing each man's identification tucked inside his battle dress, the shrouded bodies were gently placed side by side in soldierly pattern.

"It was now late afternoon and the sea breeze had quickened, making audible only scattered phrases of the Chaplain's message to grieved comrades standing uncovered nearby. 'God is our refuge and strength . . . though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea . . . earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.'

"Then sunset, and a few evening stars brightened the night which could not conceal the freshly covered graves and the unburied. This April 17, 1945, was just another day at the 6th Marine Division Cemetery.

3

"Now that we know the end, here's the complete story.

"It begins on RPI—CASSIN YOUNG had relieved the damaged BENNETT. The CASSIN YOUNG had been hit. The LAFFEY had been ordered, when in all respects ready, to proceed to Roger Peter One for duty.

"The 2,200-ton destroyer had been bombarding Japanese positions

south of Naha on April 12 when she received her new orders—"Proceed to Roger Peter One."

"Hastily her guns were trained in and she headed for the command ship *BISCAYNE* to get final instructions from Commodore Moosebrugger, and incidentally to find there some Stateside mail.

"Special crews came aboard, mainly radio and radar technicians to test, check and double-check the destroyer's equipment. It was remindful of a boxer's examination before he enters a title fight. The only thing they didn't check was the crew's blood pressure and it's just as well they didn't.

"After getting an up-check—Commander Frederick J. Becton was ordered to *Kerama Retto* for topping-off and told to pick up a special fighter director team from one of the damaged ships. Fighter director teams called 'Fidos' were composed of two officers specially trained to work with *Delegate*, code name for the central fighter director. No one really wanted to see *Kerama Retto*. Going there before going to the picket line was like visiting the casket company before going to the gallows.

"The *LAFFEY*'s trip to *Kerama Retto* was quiet. With no enemy planes around the crew wrote letters home, hoping they would be mailed before departing for the picket line. There wasn't much time to write and there wasn't much to write about. Most of the letters ended similarly, 'but if anything should happen, remember . . .'

"Now *LAFFEY* was standing into *Kerama Retto*—for the first time since April 6. Topside watch standers gaped in loose-jawed amazement. What a sight! What an awful sight! Grotesque patterns of superstructures etched against the blue sky; mattresses and loaves of bread floating in the oil slicks oozing from torn hulls. All over the harbor colors were at half-mast, as damaged ships buried dead.

"Despite the clammy hand of death whose fingers touched most every ship, *Kerama Retto* was busy as Shanghai's waterfront. Small boats darted from one wreck to another passing out information and initiating repairs. Patients, mostly burned ones, were being transferred to hospital ships.

"The *LAFFEY*'s sober-faced crew just looked, sadly shaking their heads.

"There was *LINDSEY*, a destroyer minelayer, with her bow blown back across her bridge, the muzzle of one 5-inch gun resting against the windshield on the pilothouse. Wardroom linens hung in tatters from the rigging, and some chief petty officer's uniform draped the after stack.

"There was *JEFFERS* in one berth, her decks all twisted and burned; there was *ZELLARS* in another. Her surviving officers were standing at

quarters as LAFFEY slid by. On her fantail a burial crew prepared yesterday's shipmates for the trip to the cemetery. Only a few days before ZELLARS, gleaming in new warpaint, fresh out of the building yards, had passed mail to LAFFEY. Now she had a hole the size of a garage where her wardroom used to be.

"That's my battle station," spoke up Lieutenant Matthew C. Darnell, LAFFEY's surgeon. "That's the first wardroom that has been missing."

"There was STERETT with her starboard side caved in and her fuel tanks ruptured. The GREGORY, with her starboard side amidships burned out; STANLY, with her bow knocked out of alignment from a Baka bomb near miss; RIDDLE, WHITEHURST, RALL, all with gaps in their top hamper. There were GLADIATOR, MANLOVE, HUDSON, PORTERFIELD, and W. C. WANN, each torn open by glancing blows from suicide planes; TENNESSEE, with her signal bridge burned out. The IDAHO, with only a few ruptured blisters, looked like a man suffering from a hangnail in a hospital full of victims of a train wreck.

"LCS 57, looking like a colander after talking three suiciders aboard, had returned to Kerama Retto, however, under her own power. LSM 189, who had been with ABELE, hit by bomb and suicide plane. LCS 88 and LANG bombed. LSTs 599, 724, and 884 damaged by suicide crashes; 557 hit by Japanese mortar shells.

"Not all the casualties were from enemy action. There was YMS 96, in a near sinking condition from a night collision with the destroyer HAMBLETON. There were attack transport LAUDERDALE, the destroyer BENNION, the battleship NEW MEXICO, and LSM 279, all damaged in the April 12 melee by gunfire of sister ships.

"The LAFFEY pulled up alongside the wounded CASSIN YOUNG to pick up her Fido team, and to get some firsthand information about the picket line.

"Commander Ailes told Becton essentially the same thing that he had told McCandless of the GREGORY a few days before. 'Duck as fast as you can, make as much speed as you can, and shoot as fast as you can.'

"'You won't have time to speak your orders to the helmsman,' he said, 'for hard port rudder wave your left thumb to the left; for hard starboard rudder wave your right thumb to the right. For rudder amidships, point straight ahead. You won't have time for anything else.'

"Meanwhile the Fido team had boarded LAFFEY and CASSIN YOUNG's crew had told about their battle—how they, with the help of the destroyer

PURDY (Commander Frank L. Johnson), had stood off 30 Japanese planes for 90 minutes, their own guns shooting down 15 and the combat air patrol getting 13. Just one Kamikaze got through to each ship, but that was enough.

"'You guys have a fighting chance,' said one, 'but they'll keep on coming till they get you.'

"'Yeah, they'll keep coming down until they nail you,' spoke up another, 'but you'll get a lot of them too.'

"With that inspirational advice LAFFEY stood out of Kerama Retto, Roger Peter One bound.

4

"En route to station Becton told his men of the certainty of battle, of the necessity for wearing flashproof clothing and life preservers and the importance of damage control during action. He concluded by expressing his confidence in his crew. His confidence in his crew was exceeded only by their confidence in him. Although sickened by worry and weakened by loss of sleep, they felt that if anybody could bring LAFFEY through such an ordeal their skipper could.

"Dawn came up the morning of April 16, on RP 1 as clear as a bell. Balmy spring breezes blew down from the Empire, and it seemed a perfect setting for anything but death. To the east a few miles a group of volcanic formed islands broke the emptiness of the slightly rippling sea. Occasionally a sea turtle surfaced, showing his head to the morning sun. Now and then a shark's fin cut the surface, and flying fish raced the gentle swells.

"It all looked peaceful, except for a few grim reminders; bloated bodies of suicide pilots floated by along with bits of their planes drifting like leaves with the tide, constant reminders, if such were needed, of the deadly seriousness of Japanese purpose.

"It seemed that LAFFEY had been at general quarters for days, waiting, waiting. Time had become so jumbled that hardly anyone knew the date; sometimes it seemed that time never changed; it was the third day on RP 1. Some felt that each tick of the chronometer, each turn of the screw, each sweep of the radar, was eating into the precious time left to live. All doors and hatches were dogged or battened down, the blower system was off; it seemed as if the entire ship was just holding her breath. Occasionally jumbled snatches of conversation made one wonder what

anybody could find to talk about. The pungent odor of cigarettes drifted in the closed passageways.

"Then the word flashed to the phone talkers, 'Alert the watch.' Radar had just picked up a cloud of planes. The entire scope was covered with bogeys, too many to count. It looked as if at least 50 were heading for RP 1.

"Cigarettes were instantly extinguished and action seized the men at battle stations. Men in experience, but boys in years. A heavy steel door clanged shut and the voice of the skipper and the gunnery officer could be heard by those who were standing near the battle circuits.

" 'Henke, to Lieutenant E. H. Henke, Chief Engineer in the forward, give us all you've got.'

"Smith instructed his gun crews. Everybody else waited trying to think of something and yet unable to tear either minds or imaginations from the moment.

"Then came the whirl of electric motors as the gun directors came on and miraculously began to automatically figure out the range, the problem of lead, taking every possible variant including the roll and pitch of the ship into consideration. The guns grinding away, swinging in train and moving in elevation to meet the director's demands, the conveyor bringing up automatically fused shells with a rhythmic clank, the swishing sound of the sea as it seemed to open up to LAFFEY's digging, churning propellers.

" 'Range, 10 miles,' informed the Captain's talker, Soundman Charles William Bell.

" 'For chrisakes, what in hell are dey waitin' for?' yelled an anxious gunner. His hoarse voice trembled.

" 'Range, 9 miles.'

"The silence seemed unbearable. Why didn't they come in? They should have five minutes ago. Was something wrong? Weren't they coming after the LAFFEY? Then Smitty passed the word:

" 'Stand by for main battery.'

"A droning sound; louder, much louder than the hum of wind through the signal halyards. Binoculars now revealed gnatlike specks in the sky. That was the enemy, that was death, circling, tantalizing, far out of range.

"Two planes slanted downward. The LAFFEY's combat air patrol darted in to intercept. Away darted the enemy, our planes in pursuit, over

the horizon. It had been a faint, a lure to the destroyers CAP, and they had taken it.

"Two shorts and a long on the warning buzzer; bodies stiffened as LAFFEY's 5-inch guns began to pound and blast irregularly—the first raid had started in! Four Vals dived together, then split, two aiming for the bow and two swinging around to come in from the stern. One went down. Another. The sky was pocked with 5-inch bursts. The third cart-wheeled flaming into the sea. On the ship men's throats were dry. Their palms wet. Now the steady pom-pom-pom of the 40s took up the refrain of the 5s as the fourth plane continued to bore in. The chatter of the 20s meant it was close, very close, ready to crash. Up, up, up, to crescendo went the noise of the guns, twisting the nerves of all men with it. Ship and men were welded into one. Down went the fourth plane. Men relaxed like wax figures melting in the sun.

"Spirit was growing; the steel was tempered. Let them come if they dared!

5

"No time for relaxation! Two more planes came in from either bow to attempt what their comrades had failed. Two more Japanese knocking at the gate of the Buddhist heaven.

"And then, suddenly, unbelievably, the plane that couldn't be—wouldn't be—stopped. The shock, the flash of flame, the split second of awful silence, suddenly torn by the cries of injured men and the impassive voice of Bosun Kenneth Kaufman on the bull horn, 'Fire, after deck-house.' The realization that it had actually happened. The pain of realization that LAFFEY, with all her power and security, like all other ships, was vulnerable to death and destruction.

"The Kamikaze had broken itself against the after 5-inch gun mount flooding the deck with flaming gasoline. Commander Becton ordered his ship slowed, while she shook her head and regained her poise.

"With smoke billowing from the gasoline flames LAFFEY became a much better target. Knowing that she was crippled aft, the next two suiciders struck almost simultaneously, the first shattering his plane against the same after 5-inch mount and the other dropping a bomb on the fantail, sending shrapnel through the hull's bottom. Another bomb on the port quarter exploded the 20mm magazine, jamming the rudder,

Now LAFFEY circled madly like a wounded fish, black smoke coiling above her like trailing viscera.

"Repair parties were fighting fires below decks while gunners who still had guns fought the attackers from above. One gun captain, Coxswain Calvin W. Cloer, wounded early at his battle station, went to the wardroom for treatment. Finding others who he felt were more seriously injured, he went back to his battle station where he was wounded a second time. His hair and clothes on fire, his burned body punctured by shrapnel, he was assisted to the forward battle dressing station. The next bomb, a direct hit on the wardroom, killed him.

"Throughout the action the crew worked where most needed. When the radars were knocked off, radarmen administered blood plasma after two minutes' instruction from Dr. Darnell, who had been wounded but still carried on. The Paymaster, Lieutenant (jg) Joel C. Youngquist, threw hot ammunition over the side after his 40mm gun mounts had been destroyed. Lieutenant Theodore W. Runk led a group of men into the smoke-filled, flooding after steering compartment below the main deck in an unsuccessful attempt to free the jammed rudder. Another bomb penetrated, a dud. Runk rolled it overboard.

"The drone of enemy planes became heavier as they moved in for the kill. Audible above everything but the explosions was Ensign James Townsley's (Assistant Gunnery Officer) stream of orders to the gun captains over the emergency-rigged public-address system atop the pilot-house.

" 'Mount 42 take plane coming in on port bow. Mount 43 take plane coming in on starboard beam. Start shooting 43 . . . start shooting 22, port 20s, the plane is close. Take plane port bow.'

"Although it had never been done in practice or combat Townsley took over the 5-inch mounts after Lieutenant Smith's communications were knocked out and continued:

" 'Mount 3 take plane diving on fantail. Mount 3, Mount 3, Goddam it, Mount 3, open fire.' From Townsley's position and his primary concentration on enemy planes he didn't know that Mount 3 had taken the brunt of two planes and that most of her crew were splattered all over the fantail.

"In quick succession two more planes dived into the already burning after deckhouse, snuffing out the lives of those working below in the repair parties. Now the drone of airplanes suddenly became louder. The

LAFFEY's living did not even look up, until one wounded man croaked 'Corsairs! They're ours!'

"Marines to the rescue. Just like Hollywood.

"The LAFFEY's gunfire had diminished to the point that Corsairs followed the enemy planes right down to the ship. During one of these chases a Japanese plane knocked off one of LAFFEY's yardarms, and the Corsair directly behind knocked off one of the radars. Both planes crashed, but the Corsair pilot was later rescued. Then, another strafing meat ball swooped in, dropping a bomb on the port quarter. As he pulled out, he knocked off the remaining yardarm and LAFFEY's battle flag.

"Grabbing a new set of colors, Signalman Thomas R. McCarthy shinnied through the smoke to the top of the battered foremast and replaced the symbol for which he and all his buddies were fighting. The old colors were taken below. A wounded yeoman, Jimmy Burgess, begged: 'Let me hold it.' He died with the scorched and riddled flag in his arms.

"During some of the action Becton had been unable to communicate with the engine room, but the engineers knew by this time what to do. They governed their acceleration by the sound of antiaircraft. When the 20s began firing the throttles were wide open.

"The LAFFEY's chances looked fairly slim. Fires were out of control and the ship was flooding, her fantail underwater. Every possible engine combination had been tried to make headway to the south, but the jammed rudder prevented it. With all this and nearly 100 men dead or wounded one of the officers suggested to the skipper that the ship be abandoned.

" 'I'll never abandon ship as long as a gun will fire,' snapped Becton.

"And all LAFFEY's guns hadn't quit, although those remaining had to be fired manually. Scarcely had Becton spoken when Mount 2, the one just forward of the bridge, brought down an Oscar with a direct hit on the nose about 500 yards from the ship, and Mount 1 knocked off a Val in similar fashion. Then the Corsairs took over, a round two dozen, and the battle ended 79 minutes after it had begun. Twenty-four friendly planes were hovering over LAFFEY. One of the toughest single destroyer-Kamikaze duels had ended victoriously for the destroyer. She was afloat and still capable of fighting after 79 minutes of concentrated air attack, exactly 76 minutes longer than had been thought possible at the beginning of World War II."

6

Moosebrugger ordered tugs and destroyers to LAFFEY's rescue while reports poured into Delegate from the other picket ships. To LAFFEY's left on RP 14, 70 miles northwest of Bolo, the destroyer HOBSON (Commander Joseph I. Manning) had been hit and the PRINGLE (Lieutenant Commander John L. Kelly, Jr.) blown apart and sunk.

To the LAFFEY's right on RP 2, the destroyer division flagship BRYANT (Commander George C. Seay) started to join the fight at RP 1 when a single suicider bore into the portside, knocking out all radio, radar, and bridge controls. With most of the ship's experienced officers dead or seriously wounded Division Commander Captain Thomas F. Conley, Jr., jumped into the fire fighting as would a damage-control officer to direct green hands in extinguishing the flames, and then with telephone control only to the steering room, and with only a boat compass and a badly burned chart to guide him, he conned BRYANT from the scene of action to Kerama Retto.

Other ships had been damaged in the day's attacks. The destroyer escort BOWERS (Lieutenant Commander Charles F. Highfield) limped in with a suicide plane's burned-out fuselage fused with the ship's bridge, its tail pointing forward and upward in the position it had crashed. The destroyer HARDING (Lieutenant Commander Donald B. Ramage) had her keel bent and a 20-foot hole in her side, and had to back all the way to Kerama Retto at 5 knots. Also hit were the destroyer WILSON, a glancing blow on the fantail; the oiler TALUGA, blasted in the bridge superstructure; LCI 407, a 4-foot hole above the waterline, and LCSs 51 and 116, both riddled while helping LAFFEY on Roger Peter One.

7

The April 16 raid was the third of the ten major suicide attacks that were to be launched against the Fifth Fleet. It comprised 165 planes strong, 20 planes less than Toyoda had sent down on April 12 and less than half the number that had attacked on April 6. The attacks were diminishing, but not quickly enough.

Up Tokyo way, the Japanese people stopped pounding their samisens, and squatted beside their radios between B-29 air raids, for "good" news from Okinawa. Never overlooking public morale, the Japanese Com-

bined Fleet issued a statement to the radio network which was picked up by the U.S. fleet at Okinawa.

Newsflash!

"Three hundred and ninety-three American warships have been sunk or damaged at Okinawa by the divine wind attackers since March 23. Included in this list are 21 carriers, 19 battleships, 16 battleships or large cruisers, 26 'large type warships,' 55 cruisers, and 53 destroyers. Of this total, 217 ships including 85 of cruiser size or larger have been definitely sunk. Sixty per cent of the Allied fleet in the Okinawan area have either been sunk or damaged at a cost of 1,000 suicide planes."

Actually at this stage of the Okinawa campaign, mid-April, only 14 U.S. ships had been sunk, destroyer type or smaller.

Exaggerated as it was, the Japanese radio message did carry an ominous prophecy. New tactics had to be employed on the radar picket line, for sending a single destroyer to fight off the swarms of planes was too reminiscent of the tactics of "The Charge of the Light Brigade." Admiral Turner decided to station at least two and when possible four destroyers on every radar picket station.

(The records show that Commodore Arleigh Burke had suggested to Admiral Turner, in the planning phase of the campaign, that not less than a division of four destroyers be sent to each radar picket station, each simultaneously punching in a 90-degree arc to effect a complete circle of mutual protection.)

But more was needed than a change in tactics. More destroyers and more air strikes on Kyushu's Kamikaze nests.

For replenishment of destroyers Admiral Nimitz appealed to Stateside repair and shipyards where already welders and shipfitters, feeling that the war was as good as won, were scrambling back to prewar occupations.

Destroyers in the Philippines operating under General MacArthur's command would have bolstered the shrinking picket line, but MacArthur told Nimitz that he had promises to keep and could not release them. So Nimitz turned to the Army Air Forces.

There was a definite need for heavy bombers on Kyushu but all the B-29s had been assigned to Honshu. Admiral Charles H. McMorris, Admiral Nimitz's Chief of Staff, requested General H. H. ("Hap") Arnold (who controlled the B-29s directly from Washington) to shift to the south. It was a strategic decision for the Air Forces, whether to continue pounding juicy industrial Honshu in destruction of Japan's

production potential or to come to the support of the Navy, the Marines, and the Army in return for Leyte and Iwo Jima.

General Arnold decided to help out at Kyushu and told Brigadier General LeMay to shift targets.

With daily B-29 raids, spraying fire and shrapnel over the airfields where the young Japanese pilots were trying to get things organized for their one-way trip, with increased Navy and Marine fighter protection, and improved destroyer tactics on the picket line, the job for the Kamikaze became increasingly difficult. And the damage sustained by U.S. forces grew progressively less. But there was still a long way to go. Scores of ships, hundreds of men, were to depart this earth before Okinawa was secured.

8

From a little cottage near Warm Springs, Georgia, a tragic message was flashed to all the troops ashore and to all the ships at sea on April 12. The Commander in Chief, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was dead.

"President Roosevelt dead—no, it can't be . . . I don't believe it . . . Not the President." Surgeons looked up from operating tables, seamen from their guns and swabs. "Why, we haven't won the war yet . . . he'll have to see us through." Navigators dropped their parallel rules, cooks their utensils. Some cursed; some stared into space; others, their nerves already taut to the limit, sobbed aloud.

The big boss was gone. The Commander in Chief, a casualty of war as surely as if a Kamikaze had felled him.

From his early youth Mr. Roosevelt had loved the sea and ships. As a young man he had served under President Wilson as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. After taking the oath as President, he had pressed steadily, even vigorously, for a stronger Navy. But for that foresight and comprehension of sea power, the United States might have been forced by now to offer the Japanese warlords the compromise peace they would have accepted as victory.

None of the fighting men knew what effect, if any, the President's death might have on the progress of the war. They weren't surprised, however, to learn from the new Chief Executive, Harry S. Truman, that the grand strategy of the war had already been determined. Before a joint

session of Congress four days later he said, "America will never become a party to any partial victory . . . our demand has been, and it remains—unconditional surrender." To attain this objective, the new President continued, "the able direction of Admiral Leahy, General Marshall, Admiral King, General Arnold, General Eisenhower, Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur . . . must and will remain—unchanged and unhampered."

When the news reached Tokyo, the enemy energetically set out to capitalize on the situation. Propaganda leaflets were dropped behind the American lines expressing the enemy's heartfelt sympathy:

"We must express our deep regret over the death of President Roosevelt. The 'American Tragedy' is now raised here at Okinawa with his death. You must have seen 70 per cent of your CVs and 73 per cent of your Bs sink or be damaged causing 150,000 casualties. Not only the late President but anyone else would die in the excess of worry to hear such an annihilative damage. The dreadful loss that led your late leader to death will make you orphans on the island. The Japanese special attack corps will sink your vessels to the last destroyer. You will witness it realized in the near future."

The Japanese crocodile tears were to be dried in fire.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

"It's Tough All Over"

I

"**W**E'LL HAVE TO USE blowtorches and corkscrews to get the Japs out of those southern hills," said General Buckner one afternoon in late April after an inspection of the front.

The Japanese were stubbornly defending every foot of ground, hoping to hold out until the suicide planes had accomplished their mission—mass destruction of the Fifth Fleet. Under tremendous pressure they were inching back to their main defense line from Naha, the capital, through Shuri Castle, the central anchor, to Yonabaru, southern Okinawa's fourth largest city, on the eastern shore. This line they would hold till victory or death.

On April 19 three American divisions were committed to crack that line, the 7th Division, on the left or east flank, the 96th, in the center, and the 27th under Major General George W. Grinner, Jr., which was to make the main effort on the right.

The general plan according to General Courtney H. Hodges was to break through the enemy's intricate Shuri defense system by seizing the low valley and the highway extending between Yonabaru and Naha. He estimated that the attack would be "90 per cent logistics and 10 per cent fighting." Long lines of trucks loaded with ammunition and supplies rolled bumper to bumper to the front; armored flame throwers were moved up, to be employed for the first time. Fresh troops were moving in, and the fleet took position close inshore to furnish direct fire support. The attack was planned to achieve as much surprise as possible.

Each general instructed his division that even though casualties became heavy, they must advance, the advance must be kept up, for only by breaking the line could a long campaign with heavier losses in the aggregate be avoided.

The troops would have all the fire support they could use: 27 battalions of artillery, 9 of them Marines, would fire for 40 minutes before

the attack. They would have as many guns and planes from the Fifth Fleet as they could direct.

The Japanese were quite aware of the surprise party that was planned for them. On April 15 the enemy 62nd Division, holding the line, received instructions for protecting health and morale during the heavy bombardment expected:

"Spiritual training within the caves must be intensified . . . get as much sleep as possible . . . go outside the cave at night at least once or twice and perform deep breathing and physical exercises . . . Latrines should be built inside and outside the caves and, above all, kept clean. Take precautions against diarrhea . . . resulting from drinking water left untreated because of the inconvenience of having fire."

The air-land-sea bombardment was touched off just before daybreak the morning of the 19th. By 0900 the Japanese had been bombed, rocketed, napalmed, and machine-gunned by 650 Navy and Marine planes. They had received the maximum of fire power that could be extended from 6 battleships, 6 cruisers, and 6 destroyers. They had absorbed over 19,000 shells from American field artillery.

At nine o'clock the combat troops jumped off all along the front expecting to find the Japanese buried by the bombardment. But the Japanese had burrowed, not buried, and they swarmed out of their bomb-proof caves, hauled their guns into position, and met the attack with enthusiasm. By nightfall the total American advance could be measured in square feet, every inch won at heavy cost.

But the U.S. forces, although groggy, never let up. Every morning the whole hellish performance was repeated, until on the night of April 23 the Japanese were forced by sheer weight of men and metal to retreat from their first Shuri defense ring. That night, under cover of heavy artillery fire and a providential fog, the Imperial 62nd safely withdrew to their next and stronger line of defense.

A Japanese superior private made a final entry in his diary on April 23: "I am really surprised at the amount of ammunition that the enemy has. When friendly forces fire one round, at least 10 rounds are guaranteed to come back. There is not one of our friendly planes. If some come, I think we can win the fight in a short while. We want planes! We want planes!"

Without planes, the Japanese were employing a rugged defense and showing no signs of a general weakening in the over-all. The offense, on the other hand, was growing more weary and casualty ridden.

By the end of April, the U.S. forces had brought to bear the greatest mass of armor ever seen in warfare. Self-propelled assault guns, battalions of artillery, and the rifles of the Navy's ships moving up and down the enemy's flanks. A typical day would find at least three battleships, three cruisers and a half dozen destroyers supporting the front line advance with shellfire by day and illumination shells at night to thwart counter-attack. And always Navy and Marine planes flew close tactical air support.

But with all this variety of weapons U.S. forces still could not reach the holed-up Japanese on the reverse slopes. When the shelling stopped to allow infantry action, the enemy emerged in full force.

General Bruce, knowing that his 77th Division would be committed with the capture of Ie Shima, proposed that he land his division on the southeast coast of Okinawa to attack the Japanese rear.

General Buckner, conferring with Admiral Nimitz, who had flown to Okinawa from Guam, said no. He felt any landing along Okinawa's southeast coast would be "another Anzio, but worse." The reefs were dangerous, the beaches were well defended, logistic support would be virtually impossible, and besides the Army divisions in the northern line, the 7th, 27th and 96th, would soon need replacement.

On April 29 the 77th Division, fresh and confident after its victories at Kerama Retto and Ie Shima, relieved the riddled and weary 96th Division in the center. Next day the 1st Marine Division moved into the foxholes and hard-won positions of the 27th Division, now assigned the comparatively restful job of mopping-up in central and northern Okinawa. Both new divisions were assigned to Hodge's XXIV Corps, but for the 1st Marine Division this command setup was to be only temporary. Eight days later the 6th Marine Division was to enter the front line on the right of the 1st Marine Division, and the entire front would be reorganized on a two-corps basis, Hodges XXIV Corps on the left and Geiger's III Amphibious Corps on the right.

2

Ie Shima, where the 77th warmed up for the decisive contest of Okinawa, is a small island four miles northwest of the tip of Motobu Peninsula where the Marines had been fighting. Rising sheerly from the sea to a plateau broken only by a single 500-foot peak on its eastern edge, the rectangular island looks very like an aircraft carrier with a 5-mile

deck. And it was so used—one of those “unsinkable carriers” that the hearthside strategists like to write about.

The Japanese had built three 5,000-foot runaways on Ie Shima’s plateau. To the Okinawa invasion forces they could be a menace, and, if captured, they might be useful to the Army Air Force when it arrived. So the 77th was told to take Ie, a job the division performed handily in two days.

They were proud of their audience, were the boys of the 77th. Watching them, and telling the world about them, was Ernie Pyle.

Not anyone among those troops had seen as much war as had Ernie. He had covered the London blitz before the United States got in the fight. He had slugged across Africa with the first American forces abroad; he had landed with the assault troops in Sicily; he had been bombed and wounded at Anzio, and had waded ashore at Normandy.

And now—Okinawa. The frail, white-haired Scripps-Howard columnist had gone reluctantly, urged at the last by the editor of this series with the argument that the men fighting the war in the Pacific equally deserved to be recorded in Pyle’s simple, sympathetic chronicles of the citizen turned fighting man. From Okinawa he had written to his wife: “If I come through this one, I’ll never go on another.”

He watched the defenses of Ie Shima reduced to isolated pockets of resistance, and then asked to be taken to a forward command post to see the finish. Why he elected to be on Ie Shima at all, a minor engagement compared with the history-making battle on Okinawa, probably is answered in the words he himself had written more than once: “No action is minor to the man who loses his life.”

With Lieutenant Colonel Joseph B. Coolidge, now, he was “jeeping” toward the fighting when a burst of Jap machine-gun fire sent both diving for shelter in a roadside ditch.

The firing subsided. Gingerly the two men raised their heads.

A second burst, and both again fell backwards. Coolidge, unhurt, spoke something to his companion. Pyle lay still. A bullet had entered his left temple just below his helmet.

Thus ended, swiftly and mercifully, the last assignment of the 112-pound Scripps-Howard columnist.

Pyle’s adoring doughfoots lifted his body from the ditch in the same manner as had been so often the unpleasant lot of the infantryman he had glorified. They placed his body in a wooden casket fashioned by

Corporal Landon Seidler, nailed his dog tags to the coffin, and buried him beside the GI dead on Ie.

On the spot where Ernie Pyle had fallen a wooden plaque was placed: "At this spot the 77th Infantry Division lost a buddy—Ernie Pyle—18 April 1945."

3

On the night of May 2, the Japanese generals defending Okinawa met in a cave 100 feet below Shuri Castle to discuss the situation. They were in good spirits, as the scene has been reconstructed for us.

Cho, Ushijima's Chief of Staff, argued for immediate attack. The others demurred. Much better, they said, to sit tight shooting the Americans as they charged.

But as the conference continued on into morning hours, hot rice wine warmed the Samurai spirits of the generals. Fujioka, commander of the 62nd Division, switched to agreement with Cho—charge the Americans now! Unanimous enthusiasm greeted General Ushijima's decision to begin an all-out counteroffensive on the 4th of May.

The ground and amphibious assaults were to be co-ordinated with Kamikaze planes and suicide boats attacking the fleet surrounding Okinawa.

This was to be no desperate banzai charge like the one at Saipan. The Japanese were still confident. The offensive would start with artillery, followed by tanks and the infantry, each man pledged to destroy at least one American devil.

The attack began on schedule—just after dark, May 3.

Along the front lines the 7th Division had been swept by the heaviest shelling they had experienced in the Pacific. In the center of the line the 77th Division was heavily engaged by Japanese light tanks and infantry. But the Americans had too many guns, too many men, too much endurance. The Japanese infantry piled up like autumn leaves against a stone wall.

On the east and west coasts the Japanese amphibious attack made even less headway. The little landing boats were spotted before they could put their 800 troops, overburdened with antitank guns, machine guns, rifles, and hand grenades, within wading distance. The few that did land were mowed down by riflemen from the 1st Marine Division on the

right and by naval gunfire and the 776th Amphibious Tank Battalion on the left.

The Kamikaze attack, however, was a real haymaker. The attack began about sundown with radar picket station 10 as the objective, 73 miles west of Point Bolo.

The AARON WARD (Commander William H. Sanders, Jr.) was put out of action, struck by six suicide planes. The LITTLE (Commander Madison Hall, Jr.) sank after three planes crashed between the stacks. LSM 195 was sunk with one solid hit and the remaining ship on the station, LCS 25, was left barely afloat.

The air and ground attacks were intensified next day, May 4. From dawn until 10:00 A.M. suicide air attacks were made against the amphibious forces.

"Approximately 50 Kamikazes came after our picket station," relates Captain John C. Zahm, tactical commander of two destroyers, MORRISON and INGRAHAM, and four small support ships, LCSs 31, 23, 21 and LSM 194. The little fleet's aerial escort intercepted and destroyed a majority of the incoming planes, and for a while it looked as if the seamen would have no greater excitement than being spectators.

"During the attack an interesting sideshow was provided by two nearby naval amphibious planes, PBMs, one on the water out of gas and the other circling to keep her company. Two Japanese suicide pilots, thinking the PBMs a setup, before giving us their all, set out to destroy the big patrol planes. I don't know whether the waterborne or airborne PBM gunfire was most effective, but at any rate, both Japanese planes were shot down. Neither PBM was hurt.

"Thinking that perhaps the PBM people would feel better on a ship, I sent LCS 23 to pick them up.

"No, thank you," replied the PBMs smugly, 'we prefer to stay where we are.' And they had good reason."

For very shortly after having her hospitality refused, MORRISON took four suicide hits and went down so swiftly that 152 of her crew could not escape. The LSM 194 took one aboard and sank quickly. LCS 31 was crippled by three near misses while shooting down three. The INGRAHAM splashed six before the seventh, loaded with a 500-pound bomb, bore into her bridge base, putting her down by the bow 14 feet. Only LCSs 23 and 21 were unhurt when the action ended.

The LUCE, on another radar picket station, was hit by two planes and sank. So did LSM 190.

On RP 14, the destroyer minelayer SHEA (Commander Charles C. Kirkpatrick) was badly damaged by a Baka. Other ships hit during the all-out counteroffensive included the CVE SANGAMON and the cruiser BIRMINGHAM, who caught one with such impact that the plane's motor penetrated three of the cruiser's steel decks.

Throughout May 4, the Japanese pressed the offensive, their hopes buoyed by a few local successes. Once an enemy column drove a wedge 1,000 yards deep into the American line only to be pinched off and destroyed. That convinced the Japanese that their attack was going no place, and General Ushijima called the whole thing off at midnight, May 5. He sent out an order to revert to defensive warfare.

General Cho's aggressive recommendation had not paid dividends. Although it had inflicted heavy casualties on the Americans, nearly 800 in the 7th and 77th Divisions, the Japanese had lost 5,000 irreplaceable men.

4

Now that the Japanese had shown their hand, the Tenth Army could resume its attack.

From east to west General Buckner had the 96th Division, which after ten days' rest had relieved the 7th; the 77th; the 1st Marine Division and the 6th Marine Division. He had two corps abreast. They were to envelop Shuri Castle, the Marines circling to the west, the Army to the east.

On May 11 the entire Tenth Army started forward. The main drive moved toward the outlying Shuri positions some two miles in depth packed solid with Nips. Dominating peaks formed a rough half-moon from the north of Shuri to the coast of Yonabaru. A connecting arc of peaks, not quite so high, but equally rugged, encompassed Shuri around the northwest and west. Facing the Tenth was an area of contorted ridges, subsidiary hills, vertical ravines, and escarpments, many of which would have to be scaled with ladders and ropes. Natural caves had been enlarged and reinforced; the gopher-minded enemy literally hand-carved miles of connecting underground passages through the hills. Every ridge, every tomb, every pillbox, every ditch in those pleasant-looking Okinawa hills would have to be taken by direct assault.

Marine Gunnery Sergeant Mike Goracoff of the 4th Regiment, originally known as Carlson's Raiders, describes the attack as he saw it:

"We took over the foxholes of the 27th Division after they had been unable to move. It had taken them 40 days to move three miles. We moved four miles our first day on the line, as far as Sugar Loaf Hill. It was muddy and bloody. We made eleven thrusts at that hill and fell back each time with most of our boys dead or missing.

"It wasn't uncommon to see a Pfc commanding the platoon as it fell back from a push at the hill. It seemed that the lieutenants fell first, then the sergeants, and then most of the privates. It makes my head hurt when I try to remember. But I can't forget. No one who was there can forget.

"I remember one boy, a cook, Vito Scaletta from Pennsylvania, who volunteered for front-line duty during the assault on Sugar Loaf. Converted into a machine-gunner overnight, Scaletta made the charge the next morning and returned alone, only to be seriously wounded a few days later by a mortar after he had gone back to his cooking behind the lines.

"We assaulted Sugar Loaf first in company strength, then in platoon strength, and then finally we dwindled down to nothing. We just didn't have any more and had to wait for reserves. On one occasion two shoe and textile workers reported for mortar duty—they knew no more about mortars than I did the shoe business. But they learned, and quickly. Had to with over 100 per cent casualties. It hurt to lose men like Lieutenant Murphy, George Murphy, former football captain at Notre Dame, and Lieutenant Dave Shriner, All-American from University of Wisconsin. Eleven times we tried to take that hill and finally on the twelfth thrust we went up to stay, thanks to Captain Corrigan's flame-throwing tanks. They led the last attack."

Such a long struggle was a terrible strain on the troops. Hodges, with a great reserve of manpower to draw on, relieved an entire division from time to time, but Geiger, with only two divisions available, had to keep both on the front lines.

New names popped into the battle reports: Dakeshi Ridge, Sugar Loaf Hill, and Wana Ridge took their places in Marine Corps lore beside Peleliu's "Bloody Nose Bridge" and Iwo's "Suribachi."

Dakeshi Ridge and Wana Ridge, only about 900 yards to the south, had to be captured before Shuri Castle could be seized. This job fell to Colonel E. W. Snedeker's 7th Regiment of the 1st Marine Division, which was pushing down the central Okinawan plains. Snedeker was fortunate in having the same battalion commanders who had served

together on Peleliu: Lieutenant Colonels John J. Gormley, Spencer Berger, and E. Hunter Hurst.

The Marines faced an oval valley, whose resemblance to a giant toilet bowl was obvious to the least imaginative, which they had to cross before they could occupy Dakeshi. Gormley and Berger's battalion, after bitter fighting, seized both flanks of the valley, while to Hurst's fell the uncomfortable march, three companies abreast, across the deep valley. When Hurst's men got through sealing caves, and throwing hand grenades the toilet bowl was well flushed. Seizure of Dakeshi Ridge cracked the outer defenses around Shuri Castle, paved the way for the assault on Wana Ridge and took for American use the excellent observation posts from which the Japanese had directed their operations.

After four days of constant effort against Wana's coral walls the 7th, with over 1,200 casualties, was relieved by the 1st Regiment. For the Dakeshi seizure and Wana assault Snedeker's regiment was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

Shortly after the 1st Marines went into the lines at Wana Ridge, torrential rains began and fell until the end of May. There were times when Marines wouldn't have been surprised to see a destroyer sailing through their bivouac areas. Tents, cots, and clothing floated with the Okinawa ducks. Tanks and even amphibious tractors were useless, and front lines were faced with supply and evacuation problems. Sometimes it took as many as nine men to evacuate one of the wounded through knee-deep mud. Food, water, and ammunition had to be dropped by planes and too often fell into Japanese territory.

Front-line living conditions for all the troops along the line were pitiful. The troops' food, clothing, and weapons were saturated. They spread ponchos on liquid mud in foxholes rimmed with deteriorating Japanese corpses. The only living things seemingly happy in the rain were the swarming flies, big, fat, hairy, and voracious. In many sectors sanitation broke down completely and amoebic dysentery spread through the troops. And all this noisome mess was churned day and night by the campaign's most intense enemy mortar and artillery fire. The nervous and physical strain as well as the enemy fire began taking toll.

- One tonic to the morale of the mud-bound, mortar-bedeveled troops was the close support rushed to them by the carrier planes. They located units that looked as if they were having more trouble than most, and while gunning the enemy positions they showered their khaki-clad col-

leagues with parachute bundles of food, ammunition, and medical supplies.

The outstanding instance of close support of the group troops came on May 20 when a support mission of twelve Avengers from Admiral Sherman's Task Group 58.3 was asked to land at Katena field for special briefing.

The pilots were told that a small ridge, surmounting a natural amphitheater sloping to the southward, had held up, for over a week, our ground forces advancing toward Shuri. More than 300 infantrymen had been killed in attempting to capture this position. Close-support bombing was the only remaining alternative and the ground forces were willing to accept the risk of bomb "overs" falling among their own men. After carefully studying a blown-up photograph of the terrain, the pilots took off. A Marine lieutenant rode in the Strike Leader's plane to coach him on to the precise area. With ground troops atop the ridge only 50 yards from the target area, the twelve Avengers dove in pairs, diving to within 200 feet of the stunned Japanese defenders standing in gun positions and dugouts at the base of the ridge. Each plane made two runs, dropping on each pass two 500-pound bombs. As the last two planes made their drop, the artillery reopened its barrage and the troops swarmed over the ridge to secure the position with a loss of only two men. The admirals called the attack a precision bombing effort. The generals wrote it down as "the acme of ground support."

The feat of these twelve Avengers had far more effect on the outcome of the Okinawa campaign than appears on the surface. The taking of this small ridge proved two days later to be the key to the whole salient, which steadfastly had held through nearly three weeks of pounding, and Shuri's defense line started to crumble.

The tactical situation at Shuri Castle could be summed up like this: the entire Army-Marine line had waded as far south as the Japs' main hope of defense, the Shuri Line, anchored by the castle itself. To flank it would have cost thousands of lives, for the troops would have been caught in cross fire from the reverse of the slopes, beyond reach of the fire-support ships lying off the beaches. To storm the line was ruled out of the question. Concentrated pounding by heavy artillery had scarcely dented the moated, 6-foot thick wall around the castle—actually a walled town.

The castle had to be conquered. It was the heart, brain, and backbone

of the entire Japanese defense. The towering granite walls had to be breached, and there was only one way to do it.

Nightfall of May 24 brought another routine Jap bombing mission aimed at the smoke-covered ships anchored off the Hagushi beaches. A far more important mission, but a friendly one, was headed toward the battleship *MISSISSIPPI*, a one-man mission, as the 77th Division's target co-ordinator puttered out in an LCVP to "Ole Missy." With some difficulty he scaled the chain ladder that had been lowered for his coming aboard. He carried under his arm a special assignment. Ole Miss had to punch the holes in Shuri's bombproof walls.

(Ninety-two years before, another *MISSISSIPPI*, Matthew Calbraith Perry's flagship, anchored off Naha in 1853 while the Commodore paid his respects to the Ryukyu royalty in this same Shuri Castle.)

"Guns," spoke Captain Herbert J. Redfield, Missy's skipper, to his gun boss, Commander Richard Lane. "We've got plenty of bullets, so pour it on thick as soon as you're on target."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"It's a helluva order," opined the 77th's target co-ordinator, "but it's the only way we can get at them." Then, just as dramatically as he had arrived, the Army officer departed into the smoky harbor.

The *MISSISSIPPI*'s navigator, Commander Richard E. Bly, and Lieutenant Commander John O'Leary spent a large part of the night poring over the charts and maps that the Army had sent out. At 5:30 A.M. next morning, May 25, they were ready to go into action.

The motor of *MISSISSIPPI*'s Kingfisher float plane warmed up for its first observation flight over Shuri Castle. The silhouette of the pilot, Lieutenant (jg) Theodore E. Bowman, could hardly be seen in fire-flashing exhaust as he climbed aboard. The grind of the big gears, the throb of the straining motors marked the swing of the huge catapult seaward. The go-ahead signal glowed green; down whipped the catapult officer's arms, and with the sharp report of the explosive charge, the plane hurtled into the fog; a fog which perversely thickened under the sun and made Bowman's flight useless.

But this could not hold back "Plan Special Imperial." O'Leary was all set to fire on the invisible target, and shoot he would. Mathematics were ever more accurate than eyesight.

Ole Missy belched one plume of orange flame and smoke that faded into the mist. A few anxious moments and then communicator Lieu-

tenant (jg) A. J. Klubock heard in his headphones the Army target coordinator let go with a true Rebel yell. "It was right on. No change, no change!"

Lane's gunners had the green light.

"All guns, load" became constant in the ears of the turret captains. All day long 6-gun doses of 14-inch shells rained on the castle, 90 per cent of them hits. Still there was no indication that the walls were weakening.

All night long MISSISSIPPI fired star shells if for no other purpose than to keep the Japs awake. By 5:00 P.M. the second day, the Army observers exultantly reported that there were long cracks in the wall. Grimly on her mettle, the Missy switched to star shells at nightfall. She had pounded steadily for 48 hours. She would keep on pounding for another 48, or 480 if need be.

On the third day the weather broke. Captain Redfield, determined to take advantage of the clear skies, told his navigator: "We are going in there close today. Bly, where we can really get at them."

Bly patiently pointed out that shoals were thick and reminded the Captain of LONGSHAW's destruction by Japanese shore batteries a few days before when she grounded on these very same shoals.

Redfield could not be swayed. Too much depended on Shuri Castle being demolished.

"Bly, get us in closer to the beach."

Sweat poured from Chief Quartermaster E. L. Roberts as he wheeled the lumbering battlegewagon within easy reach of enemy small-caliber guns. The enemy didn't reach.

Bowman had taken off when the weather broke and was over the target early. Flipping on his radio contact he called the Missy's Gunnery Control Officer.

"National," he said. "This is National One. On station. Let 'er go."

The salvo was close. Bowman spotted. "National, this is Ace National. Up 200. Right 100. Roger, Out."

"Ace National, this is National. Salvo . . . Splash!"

"National, this is Ace National. Bull's-eye! No change, no change, rapid fire."

What seemed like hours—actually only a few minutes—later: "National, this is Ace National. The northeast corner of Shuri Castle is crumbling."

Over 200,000 pounds of red-hot steel had hit Shuri during the daylight hours of May 27. Bowman was sent down for a final look at the castle.

"What castle?" he radioed as he zoomed over the smoldering debris.

The battle didn't end when Shuri Castle fell. The Japanese divided themselves, like Caesar's Gaul, into three parts. One dug into the knob-shaped Chinen Peninsula on the east, another group defended Oroku Peninsula, across the harbor from Naha, and still another was holed up in Kunishi Ridge to the south.

In this rugged area the Japanese put up their last-ditch stand, knowing it was the end, showing no signs of it in their fighting. Well into June the battle raged, and then resistance slowly faded. The eastern side fell first, to the 7th Infantry Division; the western, defended mostly by naval forces under Admiral Ota, fell next. Ota, true to tradition, stabbed himself just before the final hour.

The end was signaled by one dirty, tattered Japanese Marine who crawled out of a cave on Oroku Peninsula and walked forward with his hands up.

"Admiral Ota told us to fight to the last man," he told his captors.

"Well?"

"I'm the last man."

The last few days were bitter ones indeed for the 1st Marine Division. On June 20, Colonel Snedeker's 7th Marines stole a page out of the Japanese book of tactics. They jumped off at night for Kunishi Ridge, and gained the hills without detection.

Daybreak showed the shocked Japanese the Marines in possession of the western slopes. The enemy cut loose with everything to blast the Americans loose. The Marines dug in. They could neither advance nor retreat. Only an occasional tank could bull its way through with supplies and to evacuate wounded. Food and ammunition were dropped from the air for six days before the 8th Marines could break through the bullet-swept area, bringing relief.

In the early afternoon of June 18, General Buckner walked, crawled, and climbed up to the front lines to watch the progress of the operation from the newly arrived 8th Marines' command post. Enemy artillery, which had pounded noisily for eighty days, was now silent. It seemed the Japanese had poured out their last round of ammunition. Then one lone enemy gun let go three or four haphazard shots.

The first shot killed General Buckner.

Command of the Tenth Army was immediately passed to General Geiger. A week later, organized Japanese resistance ended.

There still remained a colossal mopping-up job for the Marines and soldiers. And the troops, going about the tedious job of cleaning up the battlefield of its dead and the fugitive living, looked seaward with affable envy where the Navy was heading for the horizon, its gunbarrels worn, its mission accomplished.

Japanese casualties, at the end of the Okinawa campaign, reached the staggering total of 111,351 troops, not including aviation and fleet losses. Over 9,000 surrendered, mostly during the mopping-up phase.

On the night of June 21, Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima ordered his cook to prepare the most elaborate dinner the larder allowed. Far into the night Ushijima and his chief of staff, Lieutenant General Isamo Cho, solemnly feasted, ritualistically toasting the Emperor, the Army, each other. Early next morning the two officers, attired in full field uniform, medals and all, walked silently to a narrow ledge overlooking the sea, followed by members of their staff. As the cook who prepared the prefuneral baked meats describes it, heavy comforters were spread on the ledge and covered by spotlessly white sheets. On this the generals knelt, worried and apologetic that the narrowness of the ledge forced them to face south, instead of toward the Imperial Palace as etiquette required. Ushijima's adjutant handed each officer a knife wrapped in white cloth and then stood behind them holding his saber drawn. As each general thrust the hara-kiri knife deep into his belly, the adjutant's saber flashed the coup de grâce. The partially decapitated bodies were wrapped in the sheets on which they died, and burned.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Okinawa—A Lesson in Sea Power

I

IT IS NO paradox at all that the greatest single demonstration of sea power, air-sea power, saw no fleets engaged.

On June 20, with Okinawa's loss certain, the Japanese government was ready to sue for the peace that had already been openly debated by the Cabinet a fortnight before. Only the resistance of the die-hard Army elements delayed negotiations. The Navy and civilian representation knew that the end of Japan's power to resist had been reached and, without the Army's consent, had made inquiries in Moscow whether the U.S.S.R. would intercede with the United States in order to stop the war.

American sea power had whittled Japan down to its original size. It had destroyed the Japanese fleets of war and commerce. It made possible the devastating B-29 raids that were leveling Japan's cities: first, by capture of the Marianas and the Bonin Islands as bomber bases; second, by attrition of the Japanese fighter-plane forces with carrier-based aviation; third, by transporting the fuel and bombs that powered and armed the Flying Fortresses. American sea power had carried the armies of the United States over the long, hard road from Guadalcanal to Okinawa. And, finally, American sea power had done what few of the taxpayers who supported it had deemed possible. It had stood up under the full wrath of enemy air power and, against incredible odds, had beaten and destroyed land-based enemy air forces less than two hours' flying time from their own home fields.

Only the fanatical pride of a few, but well-nigh dominant, Japanese generals prevented a peace that might well have been signed on July 4 to make that date doubly memorable in American history. They preferred the Empire's destruction to the personal humiliation of surrender. The atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were welcomed by them, for the appalling destruction those epoch-making missiles wrought on tens of thousands of women and children "saved face" for the generals. As

Hisatsume Sakomizu, Chief Secretary of the Cabinet put it, "it was not necessary to blame the military—just the atomic bomb. It was a good excuse. Someone said that the atomic bomb was the Kamikaze to save Japan."

Japan was beaten in June, and knew it; beaten as decisively, as hopelessly, as she could be. But two months more of useless fighting had to pass, thousands of lives sacrificed for the "honor" of the anachronistic Samurai, before the fact could be established.

2

More than 100,000 Japanese died on Okinawa. What was the price of our victory?

Comparative figures are meaningless. To say that 10 Japanese were killed for every American is to put a bargain tag on priceless life.

The American dead numbered 12,520. To that tragic total, the Navy contributed the largest contingent, 4,907.

The fleet had 36 ships sunk, no warship larger than a destroyer. It lost 269 airplanes in combat, 229 aboard damaged carriers, 292 from all other causes, for a total of 790. Only—one hesitates to use that word—only 205 men were killed in air combat.

The Japanese lost 7,830 aircraft and probably 12,000 airmen. All Allied losses in the air, American and British, Navy, Army, Marines, totaled 763 airplanes.

For almost three uninterrupted months the Fast Carrier Task Force—TF58/38—had operated no farther than 350 miles from the main Japanese islands, often much closer, without losing a single ship. No carrier, no battleship, no cruiser, no destroyer even, of that long arm of sea-air power had been sunk. Six carriers had been damaged, four in the first thirty days, each to be immediately replaced. It had been attacked by more than 3,000 airplanes in those eighty days, and had destroyed 2,336 by verified count.

Its pilots flew over 48,000 combat sorties, more than 18,000 of them over Japan. They dropped 8,000 tons of bombs on targets ranging from inland military installations to the biggest battleship in the world. They fired 37,000 5-inch rockets. They sank 180 Japanese ships ranging in size from the 67,500-ton YAMATO to nameless coastal luggers. Ship vs. ship action was limited to destroyer action against enemy submarines, with the score 3 to 0 in our favor.

THE FLEET THAT CAME TO STAY

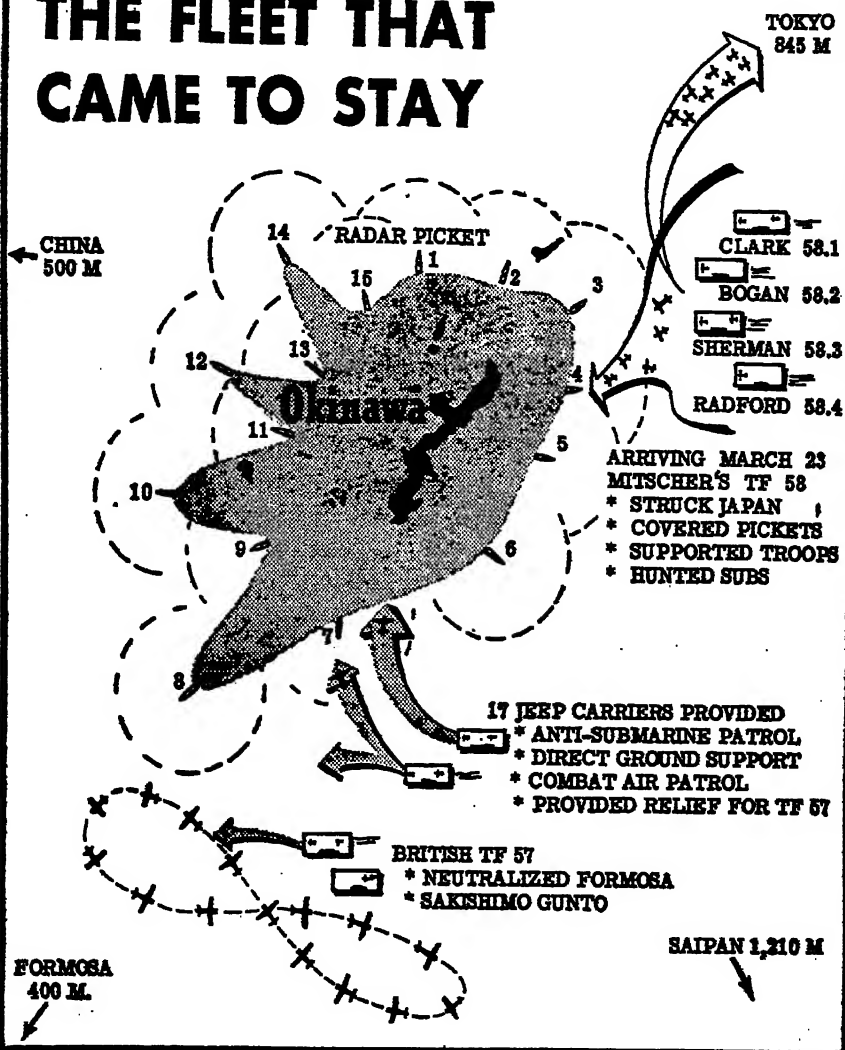


FIGURE 7

The fast carriers had done this while on the defense, while being deliberately used as a bait to attract suiciders from the ground operations, and had made this unorthodox employment exceedingly profitable.

For future operations, however, both McCain and Halsey recommended to Nimitz that the fast carriers mobility be used to exert maximum pressure against the enemy.

Said McCain: "Employment of the fast carriers in direct ground support over protracted periods is undesirable; it is wasteful of force and fails to exploit the fast carrier assets of mobility, surprise, and concentration. It invites damage to the fast carriers and diverts them from profitable targets which only they can reach."

Said Halsey: "Fast carriers can best support landing operations by offensive action. Recommend defensive employment only when offensive action is impossible or when such defensive use is the only means of preventing defeat of or disastrous losses to the invasion forces."

3

Let us backtrack a little to review Task Force 58/38's closing contributions to the victory. There is so much to tell, so little space to tell it in.

The carrier admirals agreed with Halsey and McCain that they ought to be up and doing.

"Jocko" Clark, the Oklahoma Indian, signaled Mitscher: "What the hell are we doing out here anyway?"

"We're a high-speed, stationary training target for the Japanese Air Force," replied Mitscher.

Not to be outdone "Fearless Freddie" Sherman crashed through with, "We're a multibillion-dollar worm dangling on a hook."

It was a succinct way of stating what Admiral Sherman formally expressed in his action report thus: "We gave the enemy the offensive and placed ourselves on the defensive. The most effective employment, balancing damage inflicted upon the enemy against our own losses, is in lightninglike strikes against the enemy, inflicting maximum damage possible within a two-day period, and then a rapid withdrawal, renewing the same tactics later but without fixed pattern."

The big carriers could have been used for fast strikes against the enemy's homeland, disrupting his movement of aircraft to the forward area and destroying his aircraft industry, but for one thing. They were

needed where they were until land-based fighters in sufficient strength to protect the Tenth Army and its supply lines could be established. Result, the carriers had to remain at Okinawa as live bait to attract the Kamikaze almost until the end.

The last big Kamikaze attack came early in the morning of May 11. Planes from the fast carriers shot down 69 planes while ships' gunfire got three, but two bored through the defense to make suicide dives on Admiral Mitscher's flagship **BUNKER HILL** (Captain George A. Seitz).

In the crash and resulting fires, 402 men were killed, including 13 from Mitscher's staff, and 264 more were wounded.

Vice Admiral Mitscher and a skeleton staff were transferred by breeches buoy to the destroyer **ENGLISH** for further transfer to the **ENTERPRISE**, which had returned to action May 6. The **BUNKER HILL** turned eastward for a 7,000-mile trip to the Puget Sound Navy Yard. (Since her arrival in the Pacific in the fall of 1943, she had participated in every major carrier strike and amphibious landing. Her planes had definitely sunk 162,000 tons of enemy shipping; probably sunk an additional 250,000 tons and damaged nearly a half million tons. Besides destroying 230 on the ground, her air groups had shot 475 Japanese planes out of the air, 169 of them at Okinawa. Her antiaircraft guns had accounted for 20 more, scratching a grand total of 725 meat balls.)

One gunner's mate blown over the side by the blast, a conscientious lad, remembered from training films on survival at sea what to do in case he lost his life jacket. You take off your trousers, knot each leg at the bottom, scoop them full of air with a quick overhand motion, and—presto—a serviceable life buoy. The gunner's mate executed the routine perfectly, but—no results. He had forgotten one thing—to sew up the hole he had ripped in the seat of his pants the night before.

A destroyer lookout saw the pants being waved in the air and directed the ship to the lad's rescue, so the survival lesson wasn't wholly wasted after all.

That raid shattered Admiral Mitscher's patience. Figuring that the Japanese couldn't and wouldn't soon repeat it, he decided to go after the Kamikaze nests again and destroy the next raid at its source. At noon May 12 he ordered the cheering carriers to get under way on a course that would put them off Kyushu by sunrise the next morning.

Two task groups, 58.1 and 58.3, made the trip. During the darkness preceding the attack, night fighters from **ENTERPRISE** demonstrated the

real might of night attack. They covered the entire island of Kyushu, striking virtually every important airfield and downing 12 enemy night fighters without loss. Although the enemy knew of the carriers' approach and later demonstrated that they knew their approximate position, they offered no resistance to the 700 sorties that hit them on the 13th. In the absence of worth-while targets, some of the pilots set fire to what they considered to be industrial sections of cities and railroad lines. At Sacki it was found that the B-29s had burned out most of the hangars and had cratered many runways, so the pilots went after seaplane and port facilities.

That night ENTERPRISE's night hecklers again ranged far and wide over all of Kyushu and part of Shikoku. When the Night Owls were landed aboard, they had fired 47 rockets and dropped seven tons of 100-pound bombs and incendiaries, destroying at least 69 planes on the ground and leaving four airfields temporarily inoperable. They had downed one Oscar over the target area and three planes near the task force.

Then the possum-playing Japanese bared fang and claw, and hit back savagely. And they quickly proved they knew what their prime target was.

By radar count over 30 enemy planes were circling the task force at six o'clock, and in a concerted dive one crashed through ack-ack and fighters to the roost of the night fighters and Admiral Mitscher's flagship.

The plane crashed just abaft the ENTERPRISE's forward elevator. Its bomb penetrated the flight deck, passed through the decking of the elevator pit and exploded, hurling the big elevator several hundred feet in the air and bulging the flight deck upward. Fires broke out in the elevator pit and the hangar deck, but were completely extinguished in thirty minutes in what Admiral Mitscher termed the most efficient fire-fighting job he had seen in the Pacific.

But now once more the Admiral had to move his flag, this time to RANDOLPH. As Mitscher climbed into the breeches buoy he told an ENTERPRISE signalman to send out a message to the task force. "Any more of this and there will be hair growing on this old bald head."

During the two-day Kyushu strike, 72 enemy planes had been knocked out of the air, 73 had been destroyed on the ground, and 167 more listed as "probables." Additionally, shops, barracks, hangars, and railroad trains had been hit hard. TF 58 had lost 14 planes.

Again on May 24, TF 58 launched a cleanup sweep of 98 planes

against airfields in southern Kyushu. At Kanoyo airfield 70 Betty bombers with Baka bombs under their wings were destroyed. Few additional targets were found and it was evident that the task force had done effective work in their previous strike. The score for the day was 84 enemy planes destroyed while three U.S. planes were lost, all of them by AA fire over Kanoyo airfield.

At midnight on May 27, Halsey relieved Spruance and McCain relieved Mitscher, making the Fifth Fleet the Third Fleet and TF 58 once more TF 38.

The command change brought little change in tactics. The task force continued to cover Okinawa and strike Kyushu. Surface ships bombarded island targets when opportunity permitted. On June 2 and 3 and again on June 8, McCain sent carrier strikes against Kyushu. Both strikes were well executed but previous raids had so reduced enemy air strength that only 77 planes were destroyed. At the same time 18 U.S. planes had been lost because Japanese AA batteries had improved, along with (in one instance at least) fighter pilot technique.

"We must have engaged the teachers from a Japanese Fighter Instructor School," reported one of the 12 ambushed pilots to fly his plane back on June 2. He was Lieutenant Commander John T. ("Tex") O'Neill, flying with Commander Wallace A. Sherrill's Air Group 85 from SHANGRI-LA.

"I've never seen such flying," continued O'Neill. "They stayed in perfect formation while they did outside turns, loops and all sorts of twisting dives. They made spectacular overhead gunnery runs, coming at us from above four abreast on opposite courses, rolling over simultaneously on their backs and diving at us. The fight lasted about twenty minutes before we could get away; it seemed like twenty years."

The trouble started when the 12 SHANGRI-LA pilots were sent to provide cover while a PB2Y rescued a YORKTOWN pilot who was floundering about in Kagoshima Bay, Kyushu.

In attempting to land, the PB2Y hooked a wing on a wave and cartwheeled under, leaving three in the water instead of one.

The 12 SHANGRI-LA pilots, with plenty of gas, peacefully circled the area for an hour and a half waiting for another seaplane to come to the rescue. Suddenly, O'Neill remembers, a noise like a fast freight crossing a trestle came from overhead.

"It looked as if the sky was falling in. At least 40 enemy planes, their

orange meat balls plainly visible, thundered down from about 12,000 feet. Brown planes, blue planes, and silver ones; Jacks, Georges, Tonys, Tojos, the works.

"We didn't have a ghost of a chance," continued O'Neill. "We were outnumbered and up against the best pilots we had ever seen. There was nothing to do but stick together and haul arse for home. Five of our planes went down quickly. Six more were hit in the fight. Every pilot tried to help somebody else and at least one man lost his life in so doing. Two Jay-gees, Kennedy and Kirkham, were flying side by side. Kennedy, with his plane full of holes, ran out of gas.

"Kirkham radioed that Kennedy was badly wounded, that he had ditched but had not got out his life raft, and that he was going down to help him. That was the last ever heard from either pilot.

"We could not prove that we shot down any of the enemy. We may have got four."

Later a Kerama Retto-based PBM rescued the three fliers who had watched the battle without envy from their rafts. This relatively small skirmish marked the first Japanese air victory since the early days in the South Pacific, and it was the last one.

By June 4 high winds and heavy seas developed into typhoon proportions, causing McCain to cancel all flight operations and turn eastward to escape the path of the tropical storm. All night long McCain shifted course and speed in efforts to avoid the typhoon's center.

With permission, Clark steered his task group independently and eventually separated from TG 38.4. At 7:30 in the morning of June 5 his ships either passed through or near the center of the typhoon resulting in much more severe damage to the ships than all the Kamikazes together had been able to effect. "Divine winds," indeed!

The cruiser PITTSBURGH lost 100 feet of her bow; the cruisers BALTIMORE and DULUTH and destroyer BLUE buckled plates; the forward 25 feet of both HORNET and BENNINGTON flight deck collapsed. The PITTSBURGH, DULUTH, and BLUE were sufficiently damaged to be forced out of the operating area.

When the typhoon passed, McCain resumed operations. On June 8 and 9 he detached his cruisers and battleships to bombard Okino Daito and Minami Daito, at least providing excellent training for the gun crews. Those were the last shots of the task force in the Okinawa campaign.

On the afternoon of June 10, TF 38 set course for Leyte and three days later was anchored in San Pedro Bay to spend the remainder of the month in preparation for July attacks against the Empire.

4

From the beginning, April 1, until the end June 21 the Navy's fight at Okinawa had followed much the same pattern. Fire-support ships pounding steadily by day and sending over star shells by night; planes from the jeep carriers, the Marine's Tactical Air Force, and TF 58 dropping bombs and firing rockets in support of the ground troops; fighting off suicide planes in protection of supply and troop ships; radar pickets warning of each new attack, then fighting until sunk or sent to Kerama Retto for repairs; transports under several layers of protecting smoke exchanging fresh troops and supplies for the tired and the wounded; ships, men, and planes meeting deadlines, shifting targets, and waiting. It was something like working a jigsaw puzzle of 12,000 pieces during an earthquake.

Among the ships earning a purple heart in the last days of the campaign was a veteran of the Normandy invasion, the venerable battleship NEVADA (Captain Homer L. Grosskopf). As flagship of Admiral Bertram J. Rodgers, she had been the first combatant ship to fire on Iwo Jima and the last to leave that area. At Okinawa the sturdy old lady took a Kamikaze amidships, but her executive officer, Commander Howard A. Yeager, demurred at sending the NEVADA to the hospital, and begged for a chance to put her back in fighting trim on the spot. In two and a half hours the battleship steamed back to the firing line, and for his accomplishment Yeager was awarded a second Bronze Star, to match the one he had earned at Normandy.

Aboard NEVADA, swathed in flashproof clothing, his face painted with blue flameproofing grease like an ancient Briton, was the novelist John P. Marquand reporting the war for *Harper's*, first to be accredited a magazine correspondent. Marquand was hoisted aboard the battleship off Saipan from the deck of an LSI by a rope knotted under his arms, to join the corps of distinguished correspondents the Navy took into battle.

In the smoke-filled wardroom of the command ships, reporters hammered their typewriters, sending Stateside as many of the heroic achievements as security would permit, with a headline in every story.

BATTLE REPORT**April 22 . . . FIFTEEN SHIPS MAKE KAMIKAZE KILLS
IN SINGLE DAY**

The tide turned at Okinawa today as 15 amphibious vessels shot down as many suicide planes in another Japanese aerial banzai . . . The small ships turning in this record shoot include the mine-sweepers RANSOM, DENSITY, SCURRY, STARLING, GLADIATOR; the destroyer escorts RICHARD W. SUESENS, CROUTER, and SEDERSTROM; the LCI 807 and the destroyers PUTNAM, COWELL, LUCE, WADSWORTH, DALY, and the destroyer minelayer SHEA.

April 29 . . . TWO U.S. HOSPITAL SHIPS HIT BY KAMIKAZES

Violating the rules of war as written at the Geneva Convention in 1906, the fully lighted hospital ship COMFORT was hit by a suicide plane as she departed Okinawa enroute to Guam.

With no guns aboard except those needed for saluting and line throwing the fully loaded COMFORT, her broad green band and big red cross easily discernible against her glistening white-enameled hull, was turned into an inferno . . . there were 46 casualties including 17 seriously wounded patients and 10 nurses, 6 of whom were killed.

The second hospital ship hit, the PINKNEY, looked in all respects like a combatant ship. Her gray war paint and guns gave her all the menacing aspects of an attack transport . . .

**May 9 . . . GIANT KILLER DESTROYER ESCORT
KNOCKED OUT OF WAR**

The destroyer escort ENGLAND, killer of six large I Class submarines, was the victim of a single suicide plane today. . . .

**May 9 . . . VE DAY IN EUROPE, 1,216TH DAY
OF PACIFIC WAR**

At noon today every gun ashore and every fire support ship at sea fired one round to celebrate VE day. The news sounded fine, but too far away. It was merely the 1,216th day of the war in the Pacific. . . .

**May 11 . . . TWO DESTROYERS BREAK RECORD
ON PICKET LINE**

Two rugged little destroyers, the HADLEY and EVANS, fought until they could fight no more and their flooded lifeless hulls were towed to Kerama Retto. They had shot down 42 enemy planes.

Their skippers, Naval Academy classmates, Comdr. Robert J. Archer of the EVANS and Comdr. Baron J. Mullaney of HADLEY reported that the planes started in ones and twos making it possible to mow many of them down before receiving any substantial damage. . . .

There were as many stories of narrow escapes as there were men to tell them, but none more exciting than the one told by Seaman Pat J. Macciocca from the EVANS.

"I was running down the main deck when I noticed a hand bobbing along on the glassy surface a few feet from the ship. I jumped in the water to investigate and found that it was hooked on to my Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander John W. Gilpin who had been blown over the side. I held him afloat until we could be picked up by an LCS. Both his arms and legs were broken."

May 13 . . . AIR FORCE PLANES ARRIVE TO SUPPORT OKINAWA

After six weeks of fighting, 32 P-47s of the 318th Fighter Group put down on Ie Shima's runway today, marking the first time for U.S. Army Air Force fighter planes to participate at Okinawa. . . .

And so it went on through May into June, one headline after another, until the Japanese were brought to their knees on June 21.

Still Radio Tokyo was optimistic, although the Cabinet was begging Russia to mediate for peace. As announcers told of losing Okinawa, they claimed that because of the losses inflicted on U.S. forces, and the time gained for strengthening the defenses of Japan, the Battle of Okinawa was a Japanese victory!

King Pyrrhus of Epirus was more realistic, twenty-two hundred years before!

5

The destroyer GALLAGHAN was one of a few radar pickets that hadn't left Okinawa when the bulk of the amphibious forces pulled out to prepare for the invasion of Japan. Her orders were "continue on radar picket duty until relieved." For, long after Okinawa was subdued, Japanese air-planes hopped the easy 350 miles to pester the occupation forces.

When GALLAGHAN first arrived at Okinawa on March 25 each of her 5-inch guns had fired approximately 800 times, including target practice. She had participated in the invasion of the Admiralties, the Marianas, the

Formosa raid, the Battle of Leyte Gulf, and the fast carrier attacks against the Philippines, the China coast, and Tokyo.

After Okinawa was announced secure, each gun had been fired 3,800 times, nearly four times as many rounds as she had fired in five major campaigns, all of these at the enemy. If it wasn't a record, it was close to one.

Now it was July 28.

Scuttlebutt had it that the little destroyer was going Stateside for a long-deferred overhaul that afternoon. Men wrote letters home hoping that the rumor would become fact. The Screen Commander had told the skipper, Commander Charles M. Bertholf, that he wouldn't send him out to his assigned picket station 60 miles southwest of Point Bolo because in all probability he would be leaving for the West Coast the next morning. But the squadron commander, Captain Albert E. Jarrell, was pessimistic. He ordered CALLAGHAN to proceed to her station just in case her orders should be changed during the night.

So CALLAGHAN proceeded to sea, and there was loud rejoicing when the voice radio brought confirmation of her orders. The destroyer LAWS would relieve CALLAGHAN at 1:30 A.M. so that the latter could get back to Okinawa, top off with fuel, and be off for California by daybreak.

Commander Berthold, after announcing to the crew that the ship was leaving for Uncle Sugar next morning, placed a call with the quartermaster for 1:30 A.M. and turned in. The call came just an hour too early, as Bertholf recalls.

"At thirty minutes past midnight the Officer of the Deck called me, 'Captain, we have a bogey 10 miles away.' We sprang to general quarters and opened fire on the bogey, which by this time could be plainly seen in the bright moonlight. At 1,000 yards I could see the blue flames from his exhaust and it looked as if he would pass well astern, but he didn't; he crashed into one of our ammunition-handling rooms. His bomb exploded in the after engine room and the resulting fires a few minutes later caused all our depth charges to do likewise. It sounded as if the whole ocean was exploding and the vibrations knocked me across the pilothouse like I was a feather.

"After we had abandoned ship, the bright moon was still shining. Those of use still alive watched our ship's bow go high in the air, hold there for a second and then slide out of sight stern first.

"Thirty minutes more and all of us would have been out of danger."

It was the bitter end of a bitter job, radar picket.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

"England Expects Every Man . . ."

I

SINCE ADMIRAL LORD NELSON'S famed signal to his fleet at Trafalgar, England's colonies had matured into nations and Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand warships flaunted the Union Jack in every troubled sea during World War II with the same grim audacity that the one-eyed, one-armed Admiral had inspired nearly a century and a half before.

Units of the Empire fleets had operated with the United States Navy in the Pacific campaigns from the prelude to Guadalcanal down to the conquest of the Philippines, together with remnants of the Netherlands' shattered naval forces. With the war in Europe staggering to a bloody finish, in the heart of the continent, and the noose around Japan being tightened for the final neckbreaking jerk, British naval might in the Pacific was organized as Task Force 57, Vice Admiral H. B. Rawlings in command, and set to training in the vicinity of the Admiralty Islands north of New Guinea. There, early in March, 1945, a message was received:

ACTION TASK FORCE 57 X REPORT FOR DUTY IN OPERATION ICEBERG X

Admiral King was never long winded.

Rawlings signaled Admiral Nimitz that, with "pride and pleasure in joining U.S. forces under your command," he was ready for action. Nimitz welcomed the British, who would "greatly increase our striking power and demonstrate our unity of purpose," ordered Task Force 57 to load up with supplies at Manus, Ulithi, and take over the tactical job of covering the southern flank of the Okinawa expedition . . . code name *Operation Iceberg*.

Twelve hundred fighting ships of the United States amphibious forces were making ready at Ulithi when the British force, every plane aloft, paraded into the anchorage early on March 16.

"The Limeys are here," shouted an LST sailor, hugging a shipmate standing nearby.

"They've got flat-tops," yelled another. "Lots of flat-tops." Yes, the British had flat-tops HMS FORMIDABLE, INDOMITABLE, INDEFATIGABLE, VICTORIOUS; and battleships, the mighty KING GEORGE V and HOWE. The works! It was a good feeling to see them. It was comforting.

For the British it was like the beginning of a new war. Their carriers, built for fast strikes in Europe's confined waters, were now committed to sustained operations far from base. Problems of replenishment were foremost, taxing the maximum capabilities of their comparatively few tankers and cargo ships. There were a multitude of operational problems too. This was no simple business of just so many more warships joining an operation, and being told to go to a certain place and start shooting. Communication procedures had to be integrated, aircraft identification and recognition established, bombardment methods adjusted. The British plane complement per carrier—60—was small by our standards; they had no night fighters. But Task Force 57 would have to hold up its end of the Okinawa operation by American standards of "lots of everything," and it was not only undismayed but eager.

2

The task assigned was to neutralize Sakishima Gunto, a 100-mile chain of islands just east of well-hammered Formosa, also to be kept from use as a Japanese base in support of Okinawa's defenses.

Task Force 57 arrived at the launching area, about 100 miles south of the target, just before sunrise March 26. As the sun edged over the horizon, the four carriers headed into the wind and from their decks rose Seafires, seagoing version of Spitfires, and American-made Hellcats and Corsairs. Nobody shouted "Remember the Repulse!" but many a man thought with inward satisfaction that now British carrier aviation was returning, with interest, that visit of the Japanese Navy's aviators to Singapore on the second day of the war. But the only person to show excitement, according to now Rear Admiral Edward C. Ewen, then the United States Navy's liaison officer with TF 57, was himself.

Two escorted bomber strikes and one fighter-bomber strike followed the early fighter sweeps, hitting airfields and installations at Ishigaki and Miyako, the two most important islands in the Sakishima Gunto. Little

activity was found over the target area, but the British pilots plastered the runways and revetments, if for no other reason, to get target practice.

Over the fleet there had been frequent air-raid warnings but few air raids. Except for one enemy *Dinah*, the bogeys had turned out to be search Liberators from Luzon which were not sending the proper identification signals, which nettled the British no little, and most justifiably. They had a job to do, they knew they could do it and do it alone, but they couldn't do it so well if they continually had to go haring off after blips on the radar that turned out to be American planes.

"Search Liberators can be a little unwelcome," says the TF 57 action report. "Especially as they usually show up on the radar screen as a group. Their identification signals are not always apparent and as a result part of the Combat Air Patrol has to be diverted to investigate. Such a diversion if it coincided with a genuine enemy attack from the other direction might be unfortunate. Whilst appreciating the value of these searches they have their drawbacks too and in particular it is felt that the fleet's own anti-submarine aircraft provide sufficient protection."

By dusk all the strikes had returned and TF 57 disengaged to the southeastward. That night the Japanese learned something about the British they did not know themselves, that the Royal Navy, like the Americans, was equipped with night fighters.

It all happened about three hours past midnight, when a bogey showed up on radar to the eastward. The moon was bright and the British would not have been surprised at a heavy enemy attack. It was evident that the fleet was being shadowed and Rawlings ordered a change of course. At 0307 HMS *EURYALUS*, a destroyer, was ordered to open out from the screen and open fire on the snoopers, forcing the enemy to remain at a more respectful distance, but not scaring him away.

This was the time, if ever there was one, for a night fighter. Having no such plane, the British launched a day fighter at night. Without previous instruction or training, a Hellcat pilot was flown off HMS *INDOMITABLE* to intercept the enemy.

As the inexperienced pilot neared his target he heard his opponent in English claiming by voice radio to be a U.S. aircraft, and warning him to stand clear. Even to his ears the accent seemed scarcely American, and the soloing Britisher was about to open fire when the moon was suddenly obscured by clouds and in the darkness the Japanese flew off to report that

the Royal Navy had daring night fighters of unorthodox technique. Task Force 57 was never again attacked at night.

No heavy enemy daylight attacks developed until early morning of April 1, the morning of the invasion, when the task force met with a double-barreled raid, one prong running directly into Corsairs launched from VICTORIOUS, and all but one plane of the second group being shot down by the fleet's CAP. That single survivor machine-gunned INDOMITABLE's flight deck killing one rating and wounding two officers and four ratings, and made a like strafing attack on the battleship KING GEORGE V, but causing no casualties. At this stage the ships' gun crews had considerable difficulty in identifying their own planes hard on the heels of the enemy. Sometimes they shot at both; sometimes neither.

A few minutes later the strafing ended—and the suiciding began. A Kamikaze dived straight into the base of the INDEFATIGABLE's island, killing 14, wounding 16, and putting the flight deck out of operation for a short period of time. Because of their steel flight decks, the British carriers were not easily damaged by suicide planes and within a few hours INDEFATIGABLE had resumed flight operations. A few minutes later the destroyer ULSTER was damaged heavily when a 500-pound bomb near missed. She was towed back to Leyte by the cruiser HMNZS GAMBIA.

During the day, Britain's carrier planes caught at least 14 of the enemy's planes staging through Sakishima. All were destroyed.

3

For the next few days the British Fleet held its own against the Kamikaze, while Admiral Rawlings followed with great interest the action to the north. When he read of the YAMATO sinking, he wrote into his report: "In the evening it was learned that aircraft of Task Force 58 had dealt severely with a Japanese surface force which sallied forth from the Inland Sea. Reports . . . filled us with admiration and at the same time it must be admitted with envy."

On April 6 and 7, the first two days of the all-out enemy attack, TF 57 was able to keep the airfields of Sakishima neutralized. As the exceptionally heavy enemy action of April 12 was developing, the Royal Navy's air arm, after hitting Formosa for two days, was preparing to retire to Leyte, but Vice Admiral Rawlings changed his plans and remained in the combat area.

In the words of Rawlings, "It was evident from signals received that the enemy were engaging in very heavy air attacks on American forces . . . and that Formosa based planes were taking part. I came to the conclusion we must contrive to remain . . . even if we could do little more than . . . provide an alternative target to take some of the weight." This action was taken in spite of a lack of plane replacements after the Formosa attack and of general fatigue among his men.

When writing the box score for the operations against Formosa the following entries were made in the task force log:

Enemy losses:	Destroyed—Airborne	20
	Probably destroyed—on ground	6
	Probably damaged	4
Own losses:	In combat	4
	Operationally	4
	It was with profound grief that TF 57 learned of the death of the President of the United States.	57

4

On April 20 the fleet set course for Leyte, having made strikes on 12 out of the 26 days in the operating area. They had destroyed 51 Japanese planes in the air and had lost a total of 47 of their own.

In San Pedro Bay, Leyte, the British ships were visited by Admiral Kinkaid, by Vice Admiral James L. Kauffman, and Rear Admiral Ralph O. Davis to discuss the Battle of Okinawa with Admiral Rawlings and to do some future planning for Task Force 57. Instead of returning to Sakishima, operations against Borneo were discussed. Not until April 27 did Rawlings learn, to his great satisfaction, the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided he should continue with *Operation Iceberg*.

After eight days of refueling, replenishing, repairing and resting, Task Force 57 sailed out of Leyte Gulf on May 1 to resume the task of neutralizing Sakishima.

The first bombing strikes against the target were launched on the morning of May 4. When the fliers reported intense antiaircraft fire over the Japanese airfields, Rawlings decided to disengage a surface force from the carriers and bombard the airfields from the sea, which would serve the additional purpose of benefiting the morale of the ships' crews. In the

force sent to bombard Miyako Shima were the battleships KING GEORGE V and HOWE; the cruisers EURYALUS, BLACK PRINCE, SWIFTSURE, GAMBIA, and UGANDA screened by the 25th Destroyer Flotilla. Under a clear and sunny sky the cruisers and battleships poured nearly 200 rounds of 6-inch and 400 rounds of 5.25-inch shells into the Japanese Air Force fields 8 to 12 miles away. Enough photographs were taken to show that all runways had been heavily cratered in 42 minutes of shelling.

A few minutes after the bombardment had begun, Admiral Rawlings received a garbled signal that the carriers were under heavy suicide attack, the carrier FORMIDABLE hit and her speed reduced to 18 knots.

The attack on the carriers had started about 11:00 A.M. by four groups of planes, about twenty in all. Two groups served as decoys while two others attacked. One of these penetrated to the carriers, and two of the five Kamikazes in it reached their targets. The FORMIDABLE was hit on the flight deck, with 55 casualties; INDOMITABLE got off lucky because her suicide Zeke bounced over the side merely taking with it some of the ship's radar. By 3:00 P.M. when the bombardment force rejoined the carriers, 14 Japanese planes had been shot down.

On May 9, TF 57 was again the target for a large group of suiciders. Two planes hit the carrier VICTORIOUS in rapid succession, starting fires and holing the flight deck. A third suicider made the FORMIDABLE, and fires were started on her after deck. As a result of these crashes both carriers were only partially operating and on the recommendation of the carrier commander, Vice Admiral Sir Philip Vian, Admiral Rawlings retired to the fueling area.

When strikes were resumed on May 12, the launching position was moved farther to the eastward on the assumption, later proved correct, that the Japanese were fixing TF 57's position by shore radar detection of the carriers' CAP. After this change was made, the force was subjected to no more heavy attacks or damage.

After recovering planes on May 24, Task Force 57's job was over and course was set for Manus to prepare for July strikes against the Empire.

On June 6, Vice Admiral Rawlings reported to Admiral Spruance:

Over the whole period TF 57 was at sea for 62 days, broken by 8 days restoring at Leyte, maintaining an intermittent neutralization of the airfields in the Sakishima Gunto by day. During its absence an American Task Group took over this duty. During this

time the task force flew 4,852 sorties, dropped 875 tons of bombs and rocket projectiles, destroyed 100 enemy aircraft and damaged 70 others, attacked various other targets such as shipping and radio stations . . . Our own losses were 33 aircraft from enemy action; in addition 92 were lost operationally. . . .

All participants learned much from these joint operations. United States Navy was impressed with the value of the British carrier's armored flight decks against suicide planes. In spite of the number of hits made on the carriers, they were, in every case, able to continue operation.

5

Down in Singapore sat Vice Admiral Fukudome, late commander of the Second Air Fleet based on the Philippines. Now the Japanese had lost fleet and Philippines, and Fukudome found himself and his remaining ships in the grocery business. Then the British Navy bankrupted that dubious enterprise.

Fukudome had four heavy cruisers, TAKAO, MYOKO, ASHIGARA, and HAGURO, and nothing else but minesweepers and luggers. At Tokyo's desperate demand he had sent all his tankers to Japan with the drainings of the N.E.I. refineries. Twelve sailed, each with 40,000 gallons of gasoline. Five reached Japan at the end of March, the last fuel to reach the Empire.

Of Fukudome's four cruisers, all that was left to defend Japan's stolen South Asia empire, two were inoperable from battle damage. The other two were ordered to go into the victualing business, for neither had Japan a merchant marine any more. And so the ASHIGARA and HAGURO, decks piled high with rice and millet plundered from the Chinese, skulked along the coast by night to feed Japan's by-passed armies.

On May 16, HAGURO was sunk on such a mission by a British destroyer squadron in the Molucca straits, able to bring only half her guns to bear because of cargo-cluttered decks. A few weeks later ASHIGARA was torpedoed in Bangka straits, with the accompanying loss of 1,200 soldiers she was carrying back to Singapore.

Even his contraband-carrying hospital ship, TACHIBANA MARU, had been captured by Captain William H. Watson's Desdiv 102¹ while making a run in the Banda Sea. En route to Java, the fully lighted mercy

¹ Desdiv 102 included CONNOR (Lieut. Comdr. William A. Sissons), and CHARRETTE (Lieut. Comdr. Gerald P. Joyce).

ship was loaded with over 40 tons of ammunition, small arms, five 75mm howitzers, 1,670 soldiers, 3 monkeys and 2 cats.

Fukudome's only hope to finish the war fighting now lay in quick repairs to the disabled TAKAO, damaged in an encounter with the U.S. submarines DARTER and DACE. Well secured behind nets and mines, deep in Singapore's harbor, the TAKAO blew up and settled in her dock on July 30.

At a loss to explain the explosions, Fukudome sent divers down to investigate. They found an incredible 30- by 60-foot gash in TAKAO's hull, plus two mines fastened to the cruiser's bottom, not yet exploded. In addition, a large ship-shaped mine, weighing perhaps a ton, was lying close to the keel, enough dynamite to blow the remains of TAKAO completely out of Singapore harbor.

It was a complete mystery. How could explosives be brought inside a harbor, alongside a dock, without so much as arousing the suspicion of TAKAO's watch standers, the yard police, or the submarine net tenders?

That the mines could be brought in from sea seemed incredible. The waters had been mined for 80 miles out by both the Allies and the Japanese. The Japanese had planted hydrophones, antisubmarine loops, and operated a submarine net at the harbor entrance.

But the mines were there and two young British lieutenants put them there with midget submarines.

The midgets, the XE₃, Lieutenant I. E. Fraser, and XE₁, Lieutenant J. E. Smart, were towed to within 40 miles of Singapore by the full-grown British submarines STYGIAN and SPARK.

It was a delicate assignment to say the least—towing midget submarines within 40 miles of Singapore, where Fukudome held in waiting at least a half hundred seaplanes capable of search and attack. The operational crews were ferried from the big subs to the midgets by rubber dinghy, arriving aboard about dawn on the 30th of July. Lieutenant Fraser was first to get underway. His boat, the XE₃, was slipped shortly before midnight and by 3:00 A.M. he had sighted what appeared to be a channel buoy. On investigation the buoy turned out to be a fishing boat under sail. As a full moon was shining, the XE₃ was lucky not to have been sighted. In order to avoid Japanese hydrophones and other detection devices as well as normal ships' traffic, Fraser boldly steered away from the safe channel directly through the minefields.

It took over two hours after passing the gate for Fraser to find his quarry. At first sight she looked like a mountain rising out of the sea, so

well was she camouflaged. On raising the periscope to take one last look before going in, Fraser almost bumped into a Japanese motor cutter loaded to the gunwales with Japanese sailors. The boat passed only 25 yards away.

After considerable scraping of sea bottom the XE₃ forced herself right under the very center of the cruiser and Leading Seaman James J. Magennis squeezed his way out of a partially opened hatch to attach limpet mines to the cruiser's hull.

The next two hours, from about 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. were anxious ones for the small crew of XE₃—especially so to Leading Seaman Magennis. Before the mines would hold he had to scrape several years' growth of barnacles and seaweed off the hull, a dangerous task in itself, but made more so by a constant leakage of oxygen from his breathing apparatus which sent a stream of telltale bubbles surfaceward. The limpets attached, and the massive 2-ton charge laid, Magennis climbed back inside and at long last Fraser started his run back.

Four hours later Fraser sighted the *STYGIAN*'s green light and the rendezvous was made. XE₃ had been gone from her mother craft 52 hours; the coxswain had been at the helm for 30 hours without relief; the mission had been accomplished.

The XE₁ was much delayed with small enemy craft and, instead of passing the boom ahead of XE₃ as planned, did not do so until an hour and a half later. Lieutenant Smart's target had been the *MYOKO*, but as the ship was berthed about two miles beyond *TAKAO*, the young skipper decided he didn't have time to make the attack and clear the boom on outward passage before dark.

Instead of *MYOKO*, he decided to go after the same target that had been assigned the XE₃. Having no way of knowing whether Fraser had already laid his charges, Smart took the risk of being blown up by their detonation and dropped his main charge close alongside under the overhang of the hull. He didn't have time for a limpet attack, so he jettisoned his limpet carriers and headed for the open sea. His rendezvous was made according to plan and both big submarines, their extraordinary midguts in tow, steamed back to port.

After the British got through with *Fukudome*, he had nothing left except his will to resist, and that was leaking as badly as the *TAKAO*.

PART THREE

What We Were Fighting For . . .

*I knew that Death is but a door
I knew what we were fighting for;
Peace for the kids, our brothers freed,
A kinder world, a cleaner breed.*

"A Soldier, His Prayer" (Anon.)

CHAPTER FORTY

What Might Have Been

I

IN THE SPRING OF 1945, even as the first landing-craft touched sand on Okinawa, the high planners of the Pacific War were looking thoughtfully at the gaunt islands of Japan. In Washington the Joint Chiefs of Staff—Admirals Leahy and King, Generals Marshall and Arnold—pondered. The war in Europe would soon be over and when it was, the whole energies of the nation could be concentrated on the job of smashing what was left of Japan's bamboo empire. In the Western Pacific, Nimitz and MacArthur also pondered.

The man with a gun in his hand, the sailor humped over his radar instrument, the flier at the controls of a plane, the captain conning his ship out of the path of a plummeting Kamikaze—each has a job to do. It is an immediate job and a particular job. It is a job that requires unhesitating action and quick decision.

Planning is different. It requires careful deliberation and considered judgment. All possible courses of action must be weighed and balanced. All available facts must be gathered and sifted. Often given the same facts and the same problem different men will come up with different solutions.

And so it was in regard to the Pacific War. There were two schools of thought on how the Japanese Home Islands should be attacked. One school advocated a strangulating encirclement of Japan accompanied by an intensified aerial bombardment. The other school advocated direct assault, landing on the main islands themselves.

Both plans had their obvious advantages. If Japan were completely encircled and blockaded by air and by sea, both her people and her industries would starve. At the same time her cities and her transportation system could be pulverized from the skies.

Direct invasion, it was thought by some, would get the messy job over with quicker and would be the best method of bringing to bear the full weight of our military resources.

Plans were begun on both methods of approach.

If the encirclement technique were adopted, it would be necessary to cut Japan off from Asia. This would be done by two operations—first, a landing in the Chusan Archipelago, a group of islands off the Coast of China just below Shanghai, plus a possible occupation of part of Ningpo Peninsula just across the water from the islands; second, the occupation of the southern tip of Korea in the Chinkai-Fusan area after the occupation of the commanding islands in the Tsushima Strait area between Korea and Japan.

If it were decided to assault the Home Islands themselves, it was planned to first invade Kyushu, the southernmost island, and there set up naval and air facilities to support a later invasion of the Tokyo plain area of Honshu. With the capture of Tokyo the war would be over.

During the month of April, 1945, top-secret coded messages flashed back and forth across the Pacific like the shuttle of a loom, weaving the ideas of many men into a strong pattern of war.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff asked MacArthur and Nimitz for their views on pressing the war against Japan. They in turn asked their own responsible commanders for opinions. After much distillation and weighing, Guam and Manila beamed their replies back to Washington.

Nimitz was for continued encirclement and bombing until Japan could be invaded with maximum assurances of success. He pointed out, however, that he was in favor of as early an invasion of Kyushu as possible provided adequate shipping could be mustered and adequate Army services and supplies could be made available. November 1 was held to be the last possible date for the Kyushu operation because after that the surf would be too strong for a landing. Originally December had been mentioned as the invasion month.

MacArthur was in favor of a November invasion of Kyushu and thought that all the necessary men and supplies could be acquired by "ruthless combing out of rear areas."

And so it stood. While the Joint Chiefs of Staff deliberated, preliminary planning went ahead in the Pacific both for the Kyushu invasion (*Olympic*) and the occupation of the Chusan Archipelago (*Longtom*).

The fight for Okinawa continued bloodily. Originally the *Iceberg Operation* had called for operations against the flanking islands of Miyako to the southwest toward Formosa and Kikai Jima to the northwest toward Kyushu. But before the end of April the Miyako operation was canceled

so that all effort could be concentrated on the rapid development of Okinawa. Kikai Jima, however, was another story, for it was a stepping-stone to Kyushu and it was felt that airfields on the island would come in rather handy if *Olympic* were given the green light. The tentative date for invasion of Kikai Jima was set at July 15.

The stiff resistance of the Japanese on Okinawa gave rise to doubts in certain minds as to the advisability of assaulting Kyushu in the fall of 1945. "It has been clearly demonstrated," stated one high planner, "that where Japanese troops occupy prepared defenses and are adequately supplied, they constitute a fighting force against which the best of our troops, though supported by air, naval gunfire, and strong artillery, can advance only slowly. Japanese forces have not surrendered in appreciable numbers and cannot be destroyed without our incurring numerous casualties. It would be unrealistic to expect that such obvious objectives as southern Kyushu and the Tokyo Plain would not be as well defended as Okinawa."

On May 25, however, the die was cast. The Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the invasion of southern Kyushu with a target date of November 1.

2

The main decision made, others followed rapidly. The operation against Chusan Archipelago was indefinitely deferred. Orders were issued to develop Eniwetok as a base for the fast carrier task groups. Nimitz decided to take a poll of his top commanders on the question of whether or not Kikai should be occupied as planned. A dispatch went out to Admiral Spruance, Towers, Turner, Halsey, Hill, and Conolly explaining that the purpose of the capture and development of Kikai would be to establish a base for fighter bombers between Okinawa and Kyushu. Such a base would facilitate the defense and development of Okinawa and also would improve the air support in the *Olympic Operation*. On the other hand, these advantages would be offset by the reduction in the state of preparation of fleet forces for *Olympic* and "in the diversion of offensive as cover for the development of the position which will be difficult and protracted."

In a couple of days the replies were in. They added up definitely to cancellation. This Nimitz proceeded to do on June 1.

The invasion of Kyushu was to be the biggest offensive operation yet

attempted in the Pacific War, so big in fact that all the military and naval resources of the two Pacific theaters would have to be used. There were many details to be worked out, from command responsibilities to the top brass to landing schedules of individual ships.

To iron out some of the top-level crinkles Nimitz had gone to Manila during the middle of May to confer with MacArthur at his house. There were differences, of course, but none that could not be solved.

The Joint Staff studies of *Olympic* were ready by the middle of June. Nimitz was charged with the responsibility for the "conduct of the naval and amphibious phases of *Olympic*." MacArthur, who now sported a new title "Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific," was to be the top commander of the *Olympic* show and "in case of exigencies" could control "the actual amphibious assault through the appropriate naval commander."

Two distinct fleets were to be used simultaneously for the first time in the Pacific War. The Third Fleet, under Halsey, was to consist primarily of fast carrier groups, including elements of the British Pacific Fleet, and was to provide strategic cover and support for the landing by attacks on Honshu and Hokkaido. It was to base at Eniwetok and the Marianas.

The Fifth Fleet, under Spruance, was to comprise the amphibious, support, and local covering forces. It would base in the Philippines, Okinawa, and the Marianas. Close to half a million men were to be put ashore on Okinawa, and to do that it would be necessary to combine all the assault shipping in the Central Pacific with that which was available to the Seventh Fleet in the Philippines. As an illustration of the vastness of the operation, 210 attack transports and 555 LSTs were to be used, and they were only a part of the fleet.

MacArthur planned to do the job of seizing southern Kyushu with fourteen divisions (three of them Marine) with three more divisions in reserve. The Japanese were expected to commit about ten divisions to the defense of the island. To disrupt the movement of enemy troops from the main island of Honshu to Kyushu, a razzle-dazzle, Buck Rogers operation was planned to destroy the Shimonoseki tunnel under the straits where the two islands nearly touch at the western end of the Inland Sea.

On X-minus-4-day, the Advanced Attack Force was to seize outlying islands for advanced anchorages, and radar and fighter direction stations, and in order to clear naval routes of approach to the landing areas.

3

On X-day the Main Attack Force was to strike in a three-pronged landing of one corps (three divisions) each. The Army was to go ashore on the east and southeast coasts, at Miyazaki and at Ariake Bay. The three Marine divisions—the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th—were to storm the beaches to the west in the Kushikino area and quickly seize the principal city of southern Kyushu, Kagoshima. Kagoshima Bay, from the naval viewpoint, was one of the attractions of this particular hunk of Japan.

It was not planned to take the whole island of Kyushu. To isolate the southern part on a line running roughly from Sendai on the west coast to Tsuno on the east was all we were after, for the purpose of “establishment of overpowering land-based air forces to cover a final decisive thrust” in the early spring of 1946.

*Olympic*¹ would not be easy. It was estimated that in the first thirty days of fighting Marine, Army, and Navy casualties would total close to 50,000 of which 11,000 would be killed or missing in action.

The air effort against Japan was to be intensified before the invasion. From the Philippines, from the Marianas, from the Ryukyus aircraft would take to the sky in droves. From the sea fighters and bombers of the fast carriers would continue to smash at airfields and manufacturing centers. Okinawa alone would have twenty airstrips, some for Kenney's Far East Air Force, some for General Doolittle's B-29s, some for the Navy, and some for the Marines. The Fleet Air Wings would scout the seas and attack enemy shipping: the Army Strategic Air Force (Twentieth Air Force in the Marianas and the Eighth on Okinawa) would continue to strike at Japan's industries. The Far East Air Force, together with carrier aviation, would tear at what was left of the Japanese Air Force and give tactical support to the troops in the objective area.

The planning for the invasion was based on several assumptions, one being that we would have control of the air over Kyushu, another that Russia would enter the war by the 1st of October. Much study had already been given the project of passing convoys to Russia from the Aleutians, through the Kuriles and into the Sea of Okhotsk where the Russians would assume escort responsibilities.

¹ During the first part of August the code word “OLYMPIC” was compromised by being published in a memorandum classified as Restricted. Although the meaning was not compromised, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to play it safe and canceled the code word “OLYMPIC” substituting “MAJESTIC” in its place.

In spite of the tight blockade of the Home Islands, the Sea of Japan between Honshu and Korea had been more or less immune from the ills that beset the southern and eastern coasts of the homeland. Shipping had crossed that shallow sea unmolested, for it was out of range of our aircraft. But that immunity was brought to a decisive end the first week of June when submarines slipped through mined straits into the last bit of water that the Japanese could claim as their own.

Deception is always a part of any invasion, and *Olympic*, too, was to have its hocus-pocus. Feints were to be made at Formosa in an attempt to make the Japanese believe that that island was slated for invasion in the late summer of 1945. At the same time a feint north against Hokkaido with a simulated build-up in the Aleutians would give the impression that an early fall invasion was planned from the north. Impressions were to be given—by rumor and by actual fleet sweeps—that in the winter of 1945-46 we would invade the weak points on the China coast (Chusan, Shanghai, Tsingtao) to obtain bases for bombing Japan and opening new supply routes to China. To keep the Japs guessing still more MacArthur was to give the impression that he was readying his forces for an assault against French Indo-China in co-ordination with a Mountbatten offense from Burma.

4

The Japanese, it seems, were not fooled by these sleight-of-hand maneuvers, for Imperial General Headquarters estimated after the fall of Okinawa that "if Russia did not join the war the United States would invade south Kyushu in October or November."

Consequently, the Japanese had drawn up a plan for the defense of the Kyushu-Shikoku area. Its code name was "Ketsu" which means "Decisive." The Japanese ground troops had given ample proof in previous campaigns that they would fight to the death. It would be the same in Kyushu. Already in August they had deployed into position. But perhaps Japan's main hope of turning back the Americans lay in the Kamikazes. Both the Army and the Navy Air Forces poured their suicide strength into Kyushu and its approaches from whence massed attacks could be staged against the landing forces.

Lieutenant General Tazoe, Chief of Staff of the Air General Army, put it like this: "We thought we could win the war by using Kamikaze

planes on the ships off shore: the ground forces would handle those who got through. The Army could not put up effective resistance without the air arm. But we intended doing the best we could, even if we perished . . .”

And General Kawabe, Commanding General of the Air Army: “We expected that this special attack defense would bring us to the point where we could win the war . . . Our strategy was aimed solely at the destruction of your fleet and transport fleet when it landed here in Japan. We believed that, despite your destruction of our major fields, we could very easily construct fields from which Kamikaze planes could take off. Everywhere we had built little fields capable of launching Kamikaze planes. As long as there was only a question of launching them and not getting them back, there was no question about time. We know you would do everything in your power to destroy all our airfields but we believed the airfields necessary for launching Kamikaze planes were such simple affairs that they could be mended very quickly. We believed that by taking advantage of weather, heavy overcast, intervals between your bombing raids, we could repair the airfields enough to keep them serviceable. Also we could use stretches of beach along the coast.”

Whether American planes—both carrier-and land-based—could have capped the area tightly enough to keep most of the Kamikazes away from the beachheads and the offshore fleet units will always remain an unanswered question. Without a doubt the task would have been considerable. Between them the Japanese Army and Navy Air Forces at the end of the war had 5,350 planes ready for suicide attacks and just as many ready for orthodox use. Once the suicide planes were used up, it was planned that the orthodox pilots themselves would become Kamikazes.

Judging from Japanese statements after the war ended and from captured Japanese plans, it seems as if at least three-fourths or perhaps all of the Japanese air strength would have been used in the “Ketsu” operation. Some Japanese planners visualized waves of 300 to 400 planes at the rate of “one wave per hour for each of the Army and Navy.” Estimates of the effectiveness of the Kamikaze varied. Some expected one out of six to find its mark. Others lowered the percentage to one out of ten. Actually up to that time the two Japanese air arms had scored a batting average of 18.6 per cent.

Although Kyushu was to be the big show, there were other Allied plans for operations against what was left of Japan’s conquered empire.

Lord Louis Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command planned an operation (*Zipper*) designed to take Singapore. Initial landings were to be made about the 1st of September on the Malay Peninsula some 250 miles miles northwest of the objective city.

And the plans for China were not all feints.

Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer, the top American in the China theater, had a pet project of his own for opening up a supply route to that ancient land which could supply more tonnage than The Hump and which would be less difficult than winding Stilwell Road. His plans called for a mid-August capture of the Fort Bayard area of Liuchow Peninsula, west of Hong Kong, and north of the Chinese island of Hainan, to open a sea supply route. It was a modest little operation compared to Kyushu, yet the cargoes of the five Liberty ships per month that could be handled at the port would certainly help to revitalize the Chinese. Wedemeyer had already reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Japanese were withdrawing into the bastions of Shanghai and Hong Kong. After building up a base of supply at Fort Bayard, Wedemeyer planned to go after the Japanese in the fortified Canton-Hong Kong area. Shanghai would come later, perhaps in the spring of 1946.

Yet there were only plans, and plans they remained, for Japan was worse off than anyone knew, and seeking only a face-saving formula to sue for peace.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

"Toward the Accomplishment of the War"

I

JAPAN WAS FINISHED. Her Empire that was to last a thousand years was shattered around her in a thousand pieces. In the Philippine armies that once swaggered haughtily and triumphantly were ripped to shreds, their remnants skulking through the hill jungles dazed by defeat and dizzy from hunger. On the by-passed islands of the Pacific and along the coast of long-forgotten New Guinea the Imperial troops had long since withered—in the strategic sense and in the actual physical sense. Australian troops had speared into the heart of the former "Southern Resource Area," capturing Brunei Bay and Balikpapan in oil-rich Borneo. Long since, the raw materials from these regions had been choked off by an ever-tightening submarine and air blockade. From Burma, forces of Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command pressed down upon the hollow bastion of Singapore. On Okinawa, the doorstep of the homeland, Marine and Army troops were tidying the battlefield for conversion to a spring-board of assault against Kyushu.

And in the Home Islands themselves the death rattle of the Empire was unmistakable. Fleets of monster bombers, flying on regular schedules from the Marianas, spread fire and death across the pocked face of Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku. Their thunder of destruction was echoed by massed carrier raids that rooted out the Kamikazes at their bases. From the Kuriles to the Ryukyus the islands shook under an attack even more intense than that which had reduced Germany to rubble.

The Japanese propaganda machine still blared loudly of how Japan would die fighting to the last peasant in a huge and glorious national effort if the Home Islands were touched by foreign boots. All people were to be instructed in the "sure-to-kill swordsmanship tactics." All people were to be organized into industrial or guerrilla organizations. School children were to gather pine needles to make aviation fuel and acorns were to be substituted for rice. The whole nation, it was boasted, was welded together

by one ultimate slogan of mass dedication: "One hundred million people die in honor."

Japan was fighting on, but she was fighting like a punch-drunk boxer fights, flailing his arms in a red mist.

Behind the façade of national *hara-kiri*, strong forces were at work groping to find means of ending the war. The wiser men realized that spirit alone could never stand against bombs and bullets and each day the Americans had more and more of both.

2

As early as the fall of 1944 private conversations were held among the top Imperial advisers to discuss ways and means of bringing the war to a close. Rear Admiral Soichi Takagi, who had made an extensive secret study of the national war potential and reported in February, 1944, that Japan could not possibly win the war, was directed by Navy Minister Yonai to continue his secret studies of the necessary steps to get out of the war. The chief stumbling block to peace was the Army, whose top command advocated a war to the finish. It was generally agreed by the peace seekers that they would have to work through the Emperor in order to avoid a possible military coup.

On his own initiative in February, 1945, the Emperor had a series of interviews with the Senior Statesmen—the *fushin*, or former Prime Ministers—and the consensus was that Japan must face the reality of defeat and seek peace immediately. In March the Cabinet discussed the possibility of coming to terms with China and using her as a mediator with the United States but the feelers did not develop into anything stronger.

Then in April the Americans hit hard at Okinawa and the Cabinet of Kunikida Koiso, which had replaced that of Tojo the previous July after the defeats in the Marianas, toppled. Koiso, a retired Army general, had never had the strength, or even the inclination, to stand up to the Army die-hards in spite of the Emperor's murky admonition to give Japan's situation a "fundamental reconsideration looking to the termination of the war."

On the same day that the Koiso Cabinet fell, April 5, Russia renounced her Neutrality Pact with Japan—an ominous shadow of things to come.

To understand the involved pressures and counterpressures, the

struggle of wills, the complicated political moves that were to end in the Japanese surrender, it is necessary to understand something of the interlocking mechanism of Japanese politics.

3

At the top of the whole structure the Emperor, son of the goddess Amaterasu, sat on the golden throne of Jimmu Tenno surrounded by a holy mist. Traditionally he was above all politics but was the source of all power. His chief observer and political agent was the Lord Privy Seal—Marquis Koichi Kido throughout the war years—who kept the Emperor informed of the current problems of the government and its ability to cope with them. As advisers there were the Senior Statesmen. They were completely without authority but had influential pipe lines into the government as well as the Imperial Household and were always consulted on the formation of a new Cabinet. Individual *Jushin* were often quite close to the Emperor.

During the last year of the war, when the Koiso government was formed, the Cabinet as a whole ceased to be the core of government. Instead there was formed the Supreme War Direction Council or Inner Cabinet consisting of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Army Minister, the Navy Minister, the Chief of the Army General Staff, and the Chief of the Navy General Staff.

The question for Japan was not whether or not to end the war but by what means and how quickly. This the close advisers of the Emperor like Marquis Kido and Prince Fumimaro Konoye realized, and to accomplish it a man was needed as Premier who "could think fundamentally, had deep convictions and great personal courage."

The Emperor, breaking all precedents—something that was to happen now more and more often—appointed as Premier Admiral Baron Kantaro Suzuki without the traditional recommendation of the Senior Statesmen. Suzuki was seventy-nine years old and quite deaf. His entire career had been bound up in the Navy and after his retirement he became Grand Chamberlain to the Emperor. During the Army revolt of February 26, 1936, a young captain burst into Suzuki's official residence intent on killing him. He met the old man in the hall and leveled his pistol. "Shoot," Suzuki is reported to have said, and the officer did. Suzuki fell, gravely wounded, and the officer was about to fire again but Baroness Suzuki

pleaded for her husband, reminding the officer that Suzuki, too, was a military man. The officer turned on his heel and walked out.

Suzuki had never been involved in politics and considered himself a "mere sailor," but he could not refuse the Emperor's wish. So he formed his cabinet.

As Foreign Minister he chose Shigenori Togo, a career diplomat who had served as ambassador to Germany and Russia. Togo had been in the original War Cabinet of Tojo, with whom he is often confused in the West, but had at an early date disapproved of Tojo's methods and split from him.

The post of Navy Minister went to Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, who had been Deputy Prime Minister in the Koiso Cabinet; Admiral Soemu Toyoda, who had been Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet during the famous Battle for Leyte Gulf, was appointed Chief of the Navy General Staff in May.

The Army segment of the inner circle went to General Yoshijiro Umezu, who had been Chief of the Army General Staff since the fall of Tojo, and to General Korechika Anami, who was appointed War Minister.

Less than a week after Suzuki took the reins of government President Roosevelt died, and Suzuki, to the amazement of the Japanese press, said: "I must admit that Roosevelt's leadership has been very effective, and has been responsible for the Americans' advantageous position today. For that reason I can easily understand the great loss his passing means to the American people, and my profound sympathy goes to them."

4

One of Suzuki's first acts was to instruct his Chief Cabinet Secretary, Hisatsume Sakomizu, to make a study of Japan's fighting capabilities and whether they were sufficient to continue the war. By the beginning of May, Sakomizu had decided that they were definitely not sufficient, listing as reasons Japan's inability to manufacture airplanes, the amount of factory damage from bombing, ship losses and damage, the food situation, and the sentiment of the people.

"The official government propaganda," continued Sakomizu in an interview after the war, "always insisted on ultimate victory of Japan, but the people had doubt because at the time of the Okinawa battle the

military said that they could defend Okinawa. But Okinawa fell. When the first B-29s came to Tokyo, Army fighter planes went up and tried to fight them, but as the raids continued, the number of defending fighter planes which rose was gradually less and less. The people saw this and it gave them some idea of the fighting power of Japan. Also the people were very anxious about food for it was rumored that the fall crops were to be destroyed by the Americans."

Suzuki agreed with the estimate and decided to show it personally to the Emperor.

"He went to the Emperor," related Sakomizu, "and came back a short time later. He said to me that we must start some steps toward peace. This was the middle of May. So we asked former Prime Minister Koki Hirota to speak with the Russian Ambassador, Joseph Alexandrovich Malik, in private conversation. He did so on several occasions, sounding out the Russian attitude toward interceding with America. In the beginning it looked as if we might be successful, but the talks never reached a successful conclusion. In May Germany collapsed and after that the War Minister, General Korechika Anami asked the Cabinet for a conference in the presence of the Emperor to decide the fundamental principle of the war—whether to continue it or not—"

With Germany blasted out of the war, one of the main props of the Japanese resistance to peace was gone. Marquis Kido, the Lord Privy Seal, had long believed that the Army would not countenance peace moves so long as Germany continued to fight.

But the military, as a whole, insisted on continuing the war; the feelers toward Russia had to be extended in the utmost secrecy. The only military personnel that knew of them were the two Army and two Navy representatives in the Inner Cabinet. The Inner Cabinet itself was equally divided between war and peace. Suzuki, Foreign Minister Togo, and Navy Minister Yonai were for peace. War Minister Anami, Army Chief of Staff Umezu, and Navy Chief of Staff Toyoda were for continuing the war.

"I drafted the memorandum for the conference," continued Sakomizu, "and I started it with the statement that we should try to accomplish the war and keep the Emperor's reign intact and keep the homeland. Of course the military read the word accomplish as meaning that the war should be continued, but it was followed by the details which I had collected for my report to Mr. Suzuki. The whole thing was presented to the conference in the presence of the Emperor. Those attending were the

six members of the Inner Cabinet. Each expressed his own opinion, but none expressed his real feelings. But if you read the details of my memorandum, it is clear that the war had to stop. The Emperor himself read the report as well as the others. This was on the eighth. At that time the Emperor said nothing.

"One the 20th of June the Emperor, by his own will, called a meeting of the Prime Minister and the five others of the Inner Cabinet. (It was very rare that the Emperor called a meeting on his own initiative.) The Emperor told them that the conclusion in the document presented in the conference of June 8 seemed to be very paradoxical. He said, 'I think it is necessary for us to have a plan to close the war at once as well as one to defend the home islands.' The Army at the time was making much of its plans to defeat the American forces when they landed on the Home Islands.

"As a result of this expression by the Emperor, Suzuki decided to stop the war. After the meeting, when Mr. Suzuki came back, he said to me, 'Today the Emperor said what everyone has wanted to say but yet was afraid to say.'"

But Mr. Suzuki found that he was riding on the back of the proverbial tiger. Between the desire for peace and the accomplishment there were many difficulties, and people were yet to die by the scores of thousands.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Fleet Against Japan

I

ON THE MORNING of June 13 the ships of Task Force 38 dropped their hooks deep into the Philippine mud of San Pedro Harbor, Leyte Gulf. For over two and a half months the fast carriers had operated continuously in the Okinawa area giving support and cover to the slugging Marines and sweating soldiers. This had been the longest sustained carrier operation of the entire war. Both men and ships needed a rest.

But the rest was from combat, not work. Thousands of men toiled around the clock loading stores, spares, provisions in quantities that bulged the eyes of the boot seamen. Night and day bombs and rockets and AA projectiles were hoisted on board the carriers, lowered to the metal decks and rolled to the magazine elevators.

Supply officers from the ships buzzed back and forth across the bay from ship to ship to shore to ship arranging supply schedules, fighting for critical spares, using every method of persuasion, from suave smiles and promises to clenched fists and threats, in order to get their particular ship everything needed plus such few luxury items as fresh eggs and celery. Ice cream "mix," of course, was as essential as meat and potatoes.

All loading of the hungry ships was done by amphibious craft which had seen their day of combat glory and had been left to the less heroic but more grueling duty of carrying supplies. Each day Landing Craft, Tanks—the 120-footers built to carry three tanks—came alongside the ships to take the men to the crowded beaches for two-hour liberty. There working parties from each group went to the large refrigerated storehouses to draw the allotted two beers per man. Then with the cases of beer on their shoulders they would wind their way across the white shadeless beaches to find a spot not occupied by other ships' parties.

"About as much room as Coney Island on a hot Sunday," commented one sailor as he drank a second beer thoroughly warmed by the sun.

"We should have a bottle cap instead of a star in our Philippine operation ribbon," his companion observed.

The *Odyssey* of the heavy cruiser QUINCY describes what liberty in this part of the world was like: "Liberty in Samar, which was right across the bay from Leyte, offered the world's longest bar, baseball, basketball, a scorching sun, and frequent drenchings from tropical downpours. Leyte also offered curious sights of native life. The people, though small in size, carried themselves with a graceful air not observed in the poverty stricken peoples of the Mediterranean (QUINCY had participated in the invasions of both Normandy and Southern France and had taken President Roosevelt to Suez on his way to Yalta.) Liberties were often made more interesting by meeting old friends from other ships. These chance meetings were surprisingly refreshing. At night the ship always had movies topside in the cool evening air. Rain, however, sometimes interrupted even this amusement. Occasionally intership boxing matches were arranged. These included refreshments, musical entertainment, good fights, and a movie. In retrospect the ship's stay in San Pedro Bay seemed quite bearable; yet at the time, the days seemed to drag by in restless anticipation of the next operation."

2

Finally, once again, it was time to sortie; again the Third Fleet was to head north to strike heavy blows at Fortress Japan, whose walls were already cracked and whose parapets were already wobbly. The homeland of the little men with the big ambitions was to be a living anvil, and massed sea power the Vulcan hammer to flatten forever the dreams of world conquest.

In the morning twilight of July 1, over a hundred ships slowly came to life. Effortlessly, it seemed, the great gray forms started converging toward the channel: battlewagons seemed to dwarf all other ships; cruisers, light and heavy; slim-waisted destroyers, and, of course, the flat-tops.

As the combatant ships moved down the bay, one ship would bend on 25 knots while another would slow to 8 or 10. Surprisingly to the uninitiated they all seemed to fit into a particular pattern. "You wonder again how they will fan out into a formation that seems tailored to fit the coast of Japan," one civilian sailor wrote home. "The whole thing is exciting and it gets into the blood . . ."

As the ships moved out into the Philippine Sea, as the western stretch of the Pacific is called, captains manned the bull horns and announced

to the crews that the target was again the Empire. Little did the men of the Third Fleet suspect that this was to be their last and decisive blow of the war.

"Although it wasn't our first trip against Tokyo and the Empire," wrote Commander Thomas A. ("Andy") Ahroon, Executive Officer of *LEXINGTON*, "the news caused a lot of excitement and speculation. We all felt that uneasy suspense—call it fear if you want—in the bottoms of our stomachs. I was confident that we would be under a continual series of attacks as soon as our first strike gave away our presence. I felt that there was a good chance of being hit and a lot of the men thought it possible. As soon as we heard the news, life on board took on a new tempo never experienced under other circumstances. The men knew that they had to shoot and hit, that damage control had to be perfect, that there must be no casualties to the engines and that air operations had to be smooth and sure; but all of these were minor in effect to knowing that we were going on a worth-while mission. That was the one important secret of our morale. We get scared, we have unpleasant times, we do a lot of work and most of all we miss a lot of home, but it all becomes bearable and interesting and even fun, when we get results . . ."

The long days on the run north were spent in sharpening the fleet for battle. Each day, an hour before sunrise, the men who were not already on watch were jarred from their bunks by the clanging general alarm. During the dangerous twilight hours of morning and evening the ships had to be buttoned up tight, the men had to be at their battle stations alert, expectant. And, between twilights—practice, practice, practice. Gunners fired at sleeves towed by planes or at drones—pilotless, pint-sized planes launched from one of the ships; air groups bombed and rocketed targets towed from the sterns of the vessels. Clamped over the fleet, day and night, flew a tight cover of fighters.

On July 3, a short, top-secret message was beamed across the Pacific from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Forces of MacArthur, Nimitz, and Arnold (B-29s operated directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington) were not to attack the Japanese cities of Kikura, Nigata, the shrine city of Kyoto and—Hiroshima.

3

Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet had been assigned the mission of jerking the noose even tighter around the emaciated neck of the Empire. The

sea and air blockade had halted shipping from the Asiatic mainland to the Home Islands and, largely, even shipping between the islands themselves. Mines choked the vital Shimonoseki Straits between Kyushu and the western tip of Honshu. Submarines in the shallow Sea of Japan sliced the last tenuous supply lines to Korea. Each day aircraft of Fleet Air Wing 18 from Okinawa fanned out across the Yellow Sea and the Korean Straits into the Sea of Japan searching for anything Japanese that floated.

Shore-based air flew north each day from Okinawa to hit the southernmost main Japanese island of Kyushu. From the Iwo-Marianas axis came swarms of B-29s to pound the Tokyo area, southern Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku. At Iwo, so recently won with Marine blood, the big bombers picked up fighter escort.

"When the Army fighters go up from Iwo," remarked Rear Admiral Forrest P. Sherman during a briefing of correspondents, "they can't stay very long. The trip from Iwo to Japan and back is a hell of a long strike for a single seater, even if it's a bright day and you have the Lincoln Highway underneath you all the way. So one of the things which we will try to do with the fleet is to get in there at closer range with planes that can stay longer, and see if we can't flush some of these enemy aircraft to get the rate of destruction larger than the rate of manufacture, which is what we must do if we're going to wear that air force down . . .

"The enemy air force built up to a peak, which we hope to call the all-time peak, about March 18 when we started the Okinawa campaign. The destruction that we inflicted from then on caused the strength to fall off, but during June our bag has not been adequate at all. We have destroyed very few aircraft. They're out of contact. They've pulled back in and are obviously conserving their air force against the day when we start another operation. During the big Kamikaze attacks they were spending capital as well as income. They're not doing that any more. They're saving up and getting ahead."

4

There were to be two "firsts" on the fleet's program: air attacks on northern Honshu and Hokkaido and the ship bombardment of key coastal cities. Preparations had been elaborate: B-29s had made reconnaissance of the Honshu-Hokkaido area; Navy photo Liberators, escorted by Army Mustangs, covered the Tokyo area; a submarine reconnaissance



PLATE LXV—Admirals in working clothes. "Uniform of the day" was subject to wide variations as the Pacific war neared its triumphal climax. (*above*) Admiral William F. ("Bull") Halsey, Jr., Commander of the Third Fleet, wearing his traditional engineer's cap, confers with Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, Commander of the Fifth Fleet, in tropical sun helmet, off Okinawa, April 1945. (*below*) Fleet Admiral G. W. Nimitz (*left center*), wearing a barracks cap, holds a press conference in the former Japanese operations building, Yontan airfield, Okinawa, April 24, 1945.





PLATE LXVI—(upper) In the Pacific war Flight Nurses were real-life "winged angels of mercy." One of these courageous women, Lt. (jg) Mae Hanson, of Benson, Minn., takes a few minutes' rest after making sure her wounded cases are resting comfortably, aboard a Nats hospital plane en route from Okinawa to a Marianas base hospital.

(center) Naha, capital of Okinawa, was stubbornly defended by the Japanese. Here Marines, under enemy fire, close in on the battered city. (*Marine Corps Photo.*)



(lower) Lucky break for a Sixth Marine Division tank. Japanese shell, a bit short, sends up a shower of mud and debris in the attack on Naha. (*Marine Corps Photo.*)



PLATE LXVII—(upper) "Any more of this and there will be hair growing on this old bald head," quipped Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher, as he transferred his flag to the RANDOLPH, after being bombed out of both the BUNKER HILL and the ENTERPRISE, during carrier raids off Kyushu, May 1945.

(center) Paul J. Redmond, one of the Navy's "fighten'est" chaplains, visits the 31st Field Hospital, Okinawa. The wounded Marine is Lloyd Cook of Manteca, Cal., a member of the 4th Marines. Chaplain Redmond wears a Marine field uniform because he often accompanied his men into action.

(lower) Not even clearly marked and lighted hospital ships were safe from Kamikaze attack. Army nurses inspect the remains of a Japanese suicide plane which crashed into the USS COMFORT, near Okinawa, killing 29 and wounding 33, including patients and medical personnel. The nurses, left to right, are: Mary Lee Carpenter, Gertrude J. Weiss, Irene Jacoby, Frances M. Lajevic, Doris Gardner, and Mary Rodden.





PLATE LXVIII—"Be it ever so humble. . . ." (*above*) Members of the Sixth Marine Division convert a bomb crater near the Naha airfield into "The old swimming hole," a la bathtub and washbasin. A wrecked Japanese plane provided a convenient clothesline. (*below*) Bravely sampling some of his own chow, Corporal Nelson Deffner, mess sergeant, reassures his Marine buddies that it is OK. "Victims" left to right, are: Privates Afton Eloff, Dewey R. Smith, and Richard E. Parsons.





PLATE LXIX—Heave to port! Violent tropical storms and typhoons constantly menaced operations against the Philippines and Okinawa. (*above*) The carrier **LANGLEY** rides out a heavy blow in the South China Sea. Some idea of the extreme roll of the ship may be obtained by noting that the men in the antiaircraft tub (*left*) would normally be more than 40 feet above the water! (*below*) **USS PITTSBURGH**, back in Guam after having more than 100 feet of her bow snapped off in a typhoon June 5, 1945. In the same storm the **BALTIMORE**, **HORNET**, **BENNINGTON**, **DULUTH**, and **BLUE** also were damaged.





PLATE LXX—The end of a Navy. Allied carrier planes polish off Nippon's once proud battle fleet while it rides at anchor in its own backyard. (*upper left*) Oil flows from the Japanese cruiser oyodo as she rolls on her side in a cove of Kure harbor. The oyodo was trapped by U.S. and British carrier planes of the Third Fleet.



(*center and lower left*) Two views of the great Japanese battleship HARUNA under Allied carrier plane attack, in the Kure area, July 28, 1945. With gaping holes blown in her fantail and superstructure she settled to the bottom.



PLATE LXXI—(upper right) B-29s assist in the annihilation of the Japanese fleet and its bases. The stern of a Japanese battleship is bracketed by two-ton bombs, dropped from superfortresses on Kure Naval Arsenal, June 22, 1945. (21st Bomber Command Photo.)

(center) The Japanese battleship *HYUGA* rests on the bottom of the Inland Sea, near Nasake Shima, after being blasted by U.S. and British Navy carrier planes attached to the Third Fleet.

(lower) Camouflage nets fail to conceal this big Japanese cruiser, the *TONE*, from carrier planes of the U.S. Third Fleet as they definitely put her out of the war during mass attacks on naval installations, Kure harbor, July 28, 1945.



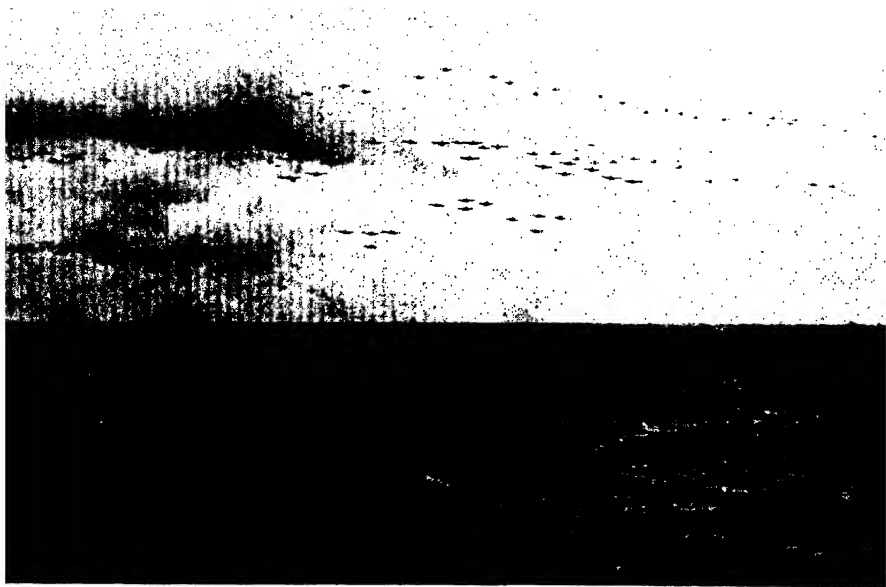


PLATE LXXII—(above) Wings over Japan, hundreds of them, as carriers of the mighty Third Fleet approach the Japanese homeland, August 2. (below) After three years' work, the fulfillment. Scientists and Army and Navy officers watch the loading of the first atomic bomb used in warfare, North Field, Tinian, August 5, 1945. In the group, at left, are Rear Admiral W. R. Purnell, Brig. Gen. T. F. Farrell, Jr., and Captain W. S. Parsons. In center, arms akimbo, stands Dr. Norman Ramsey, Jr., of the Los Alamos technical group, and, extreme right, is Comdr. A. F. Birch.



PLATE LXXIII—Secret weapons—theirs and ours. A study in contrast: baka bomb and dummy plane of the Japanese, and the American atomic bomb!

(upper) A fantastic cloudhead rises over the flaming ruins of Nagasaki, second victim of an atomic bomb, August 9, 1945. This was the knockout punch to a reeling adversary.

(center) Planes made of wicker and straw, with bright red suns painted on wings and fuselage, were scattered over Okinawa airfields to attract strafing fire of our attacking aircraft.

(lower) In March 1945 the Japanese introduced the human-guided missile, launched from a plane. They called it "Oka" for cherry blossom; we called it "Baka" for foolish. Of 800 built, only 50 were launched, and three credited with hits. This one was found on Yontan airfield, Okinawa.

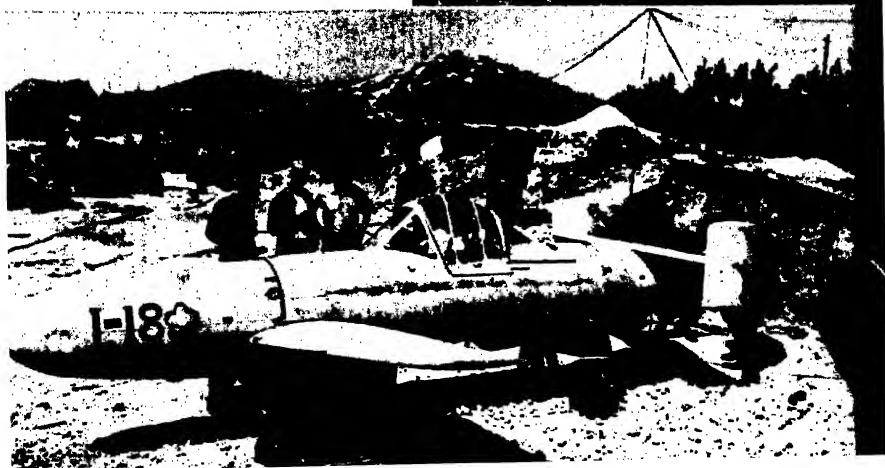




PLATE LXXIV—Hiroshima, where a new age was born. The first human beings against whom the atomic bomb was used were the 245,000 inhabitants of this strategic Japanese military and industrial center. This photograph showing the waterfront and wharves which made Hiroshima an important shipping point was taken before the atomic bombing. (*Army Air Force Photo.*)

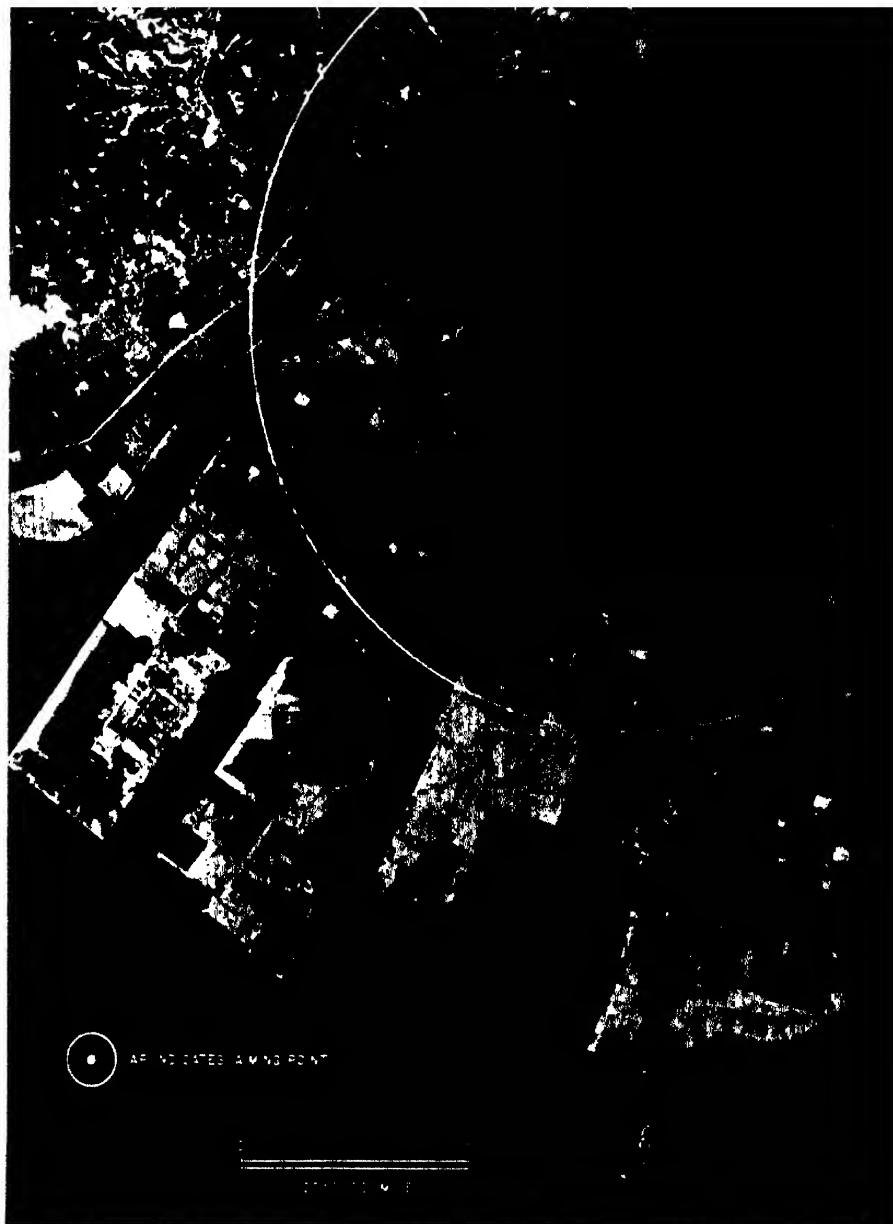


PLATE LXXV—Where once was a city, a trash heap remained. The small circle indicates the aiming point; the larger one, the area of total destruction. Between 70,000 and 80,000 people perished; an equal number were injured. The attack achieved greater surprise because Hiroshima had been spared incendiary raids that had devastated sister Japanese cities. (*Army Air Force Photo.*)

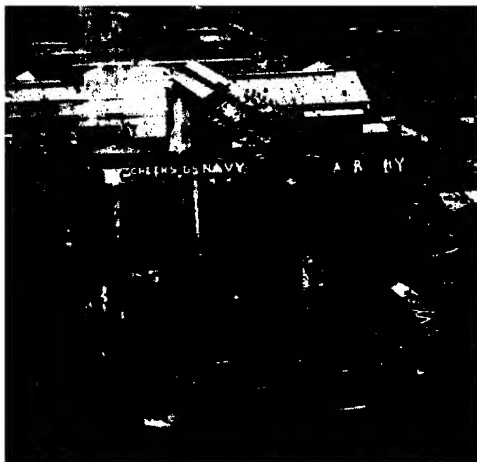
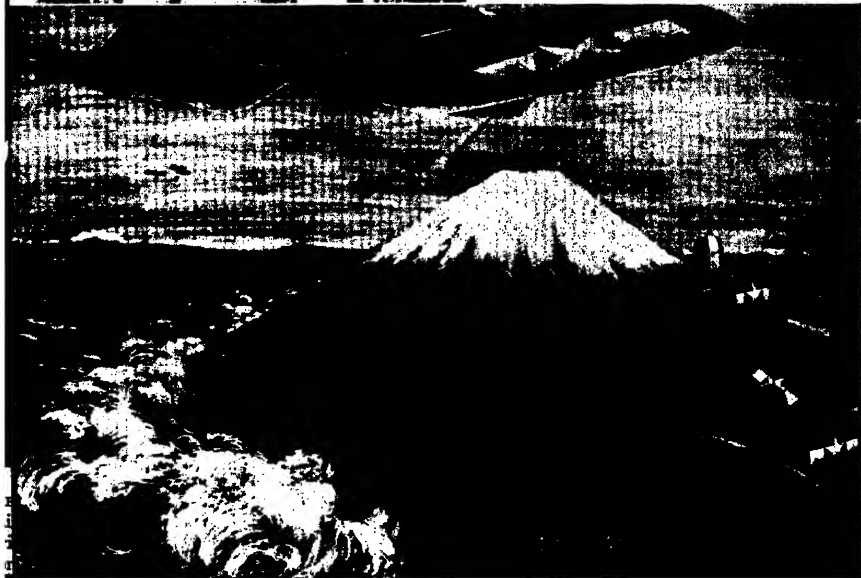


PLATE LXXVI—(upper) Homemade but effective lettering on a Yokohama warehouse told Allied airmen where U.S. Navy and Army prisoners of war could be found.



(center) They heard the Emperor's broadcast and promptly surrendered. Col. Julian G. Hearne, Jr., commanding officer 24th Infantry (left center), receives the sword of Major Yoshihiko Noda, at Aka Shima, near Okinawa, August 22, 1945. This ceremony followed, by only a few hours, the first voluntary Japanese surrender, which took place aboard the USS *Levy* at Mille atoll, the Marshalls. (U.S. Army Photo.)



(lower) Marine flyers, in Corsairs, buzz the sacred slopes of Mount Fujiyama. For all that it meant to the Japanese, Fuji was, nevertheless, a friend of American flyers. Its frosty cone served as a landmark when the surrounding country was blanketed in clouds, and it made a beautiful "pip" on a radar screen. (Painting by Comdr. Standis Backus, Official Navy Combat Artist.)

PLATE LXXVII—(*upper*) The sun sets on Fuji, and on a dream of empire, as units of the Third Fleet move into Sagami Wan, near Tokyo, preparatory to formal surrender ceremonies.

(*center*) Japan's biggest surviving warship, the *NAGATO*, is surrendered to U.S. Navy forces in Tokyo Bay, August 20, 1945. Captain Cornelius W. Flynn (*center, hands on hips*) arranged the terms. The *NAGATO* later was sunk as a "guinea pig" during the Bikini A-bomb experiments.

(*lower*) Marines of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Regiment, who made the first landing on Japan, August 30, called this "the most tense five minutes of the war." Would the Japanese soldiers keep their agreement? Or would they hold fire until the Marines reached the water's edge and then massacre the invaders? (There had been no preliminary bombardment.) But the Japs abided by the surrender terms and the Marines went safely ashore at Futtsu Cape, opposite Yokosuka. (*Painting by Comdr. Standish Backus, Official Navy Combat Artist.*)

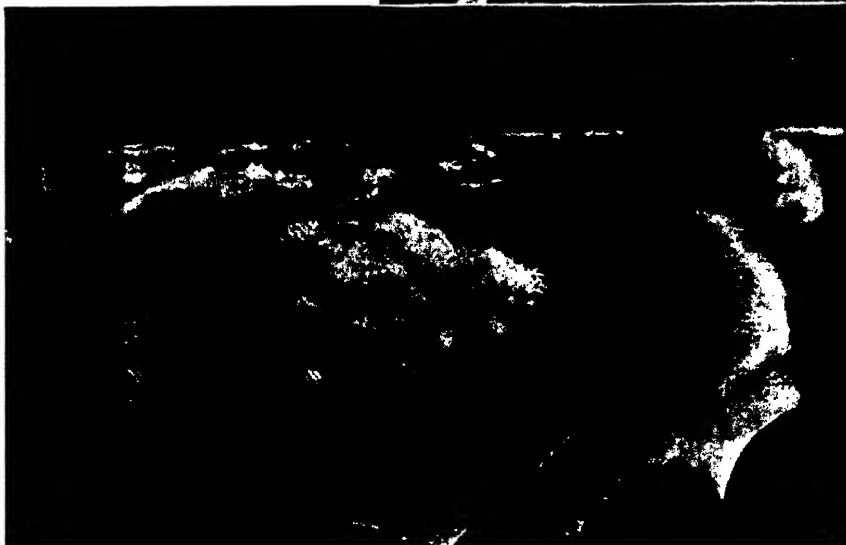
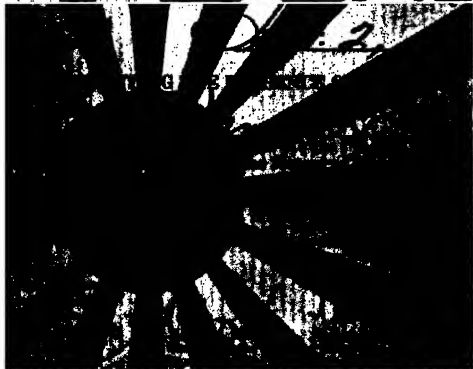




PLATE LXXVIII—September 2, 1945, the day of reckoning for the Japanese!

(upper) Aboard the great battleship *MISSOURI*, a delegation representing the Emperor of Japan stands at respectful attention as General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for all the Allied Powers, signs the surrender document. Representatives of nine Allied nations affixed their signatures.



(center) A valued souvenir, given to all who were aboard the *MISSOURI* on the historic 2nd of September, was this card, with the imprint of a Japanese battleflag and the signatures of four high ranking U.S. officials.



(lower) Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz signs for the United States. Standing behind the surrender table (now in the Naval Academy Museum at Annapolis) are: General MacArthur, Admiral William F. Halsey, and Rear Admiral Forrest Sherman. Beyond are some of the admirals and generals who led our men to victory in the Pacific.

PLATE LXXIX—(*upper*) Another important surrender took place on V-J day when documents for the Caroline and other Pacific islands were signed on board the USS PORTLAND. Vice Admiral George D. Murray (*seated*) watches intently as Lieut. General Shunzaburo Magikura, commander of the 31st Imperial Army, affixes his signature. Behind the table (*left to right*) are Captain O. F. Naquin, Captain D. N. Cone, Captain Lyman A. Thackrey, and Lt. L. N. Thomas.

(*center*) Commander Harold E. Stassen, of Admiral Halsey's staff greets joyful Allied prisoners of war in Japan after he had helped to rescue them. This group was from Nisson Mill Camp No. 2.

(*lower*) First Japanese to formally surrender in World War II. Japanese Navy Captain Shiga, Commanding Officer, Mille atoll, salutes the officer of the deck, Lt. (jg) Daniel Evans and the skipper, Lt. Comdr. William Clarenbach, of the destroyer escort LEVY, as he arrives aboard to sign the surrender documents. Captain Shiga, later executed as a war criminal, signed at 32 minutes past noon, August 22. Climbing the ladder behind Captain Shiga is the escort division commander, Comdr. Harold E. Cross.

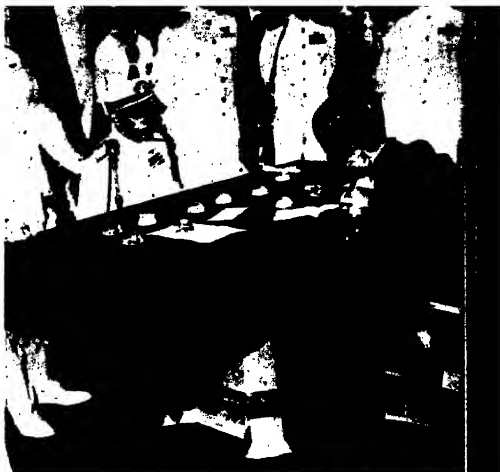




PLATE LXXX—Token of victory in the Pacific. (*above*) President Truman receives the official surrender document at the White House, September 7, in the presence of cabinet members and military leaders. Left to right: Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal; Colonel Bernard Thielen, courier who brought the document from Tokyo Bay; Secretary of War Henry Stimson; General of the Army George C. Marshall; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King; Dean Acheson, Acting Secretary of State; General Alexander A. Vandergrift, Commandant of the Marine Corps; Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the commander in chief; and Lt. General Ira C. Eaker, of the Army Air Forces. (*below*) *Operation Magic Carpet* brought the boys home, not in luxury, but, what was more important, in a hurry. A battle-scarred carrier becomes a passenger vessel to rush "Island Weary" Seabees back for discharge.



had been made for possible minefields in the area selected for surface bombardments.

As the fleet rode a weather front in toward the coast of Honshu, barrier patrols flew ahead to dispose of possible Japanese snoopers, and submarines swept the path clean of pickets so that the launching zone 170 miles southeast of Tokyo could be reached undetected.

At 4:00 A.M., July 10, two hours after coming out of the weather front, fighter planes zipped off the carriers' decks toward Tokyo for the first time since February. The strike plan was the standard one and was as familiar to the aviators as slipping into a flying jacket.

First a fast fighter sweep by Hellcats and Corsairs was to knock down enemy airborne planes and shoot up ground facilities and parked planes.

The second strike, also fighters, was to take up the job where the first left off before the Japanese could get from their foxholes to the nearest burning plane. Even before the first strike returned the third, torpedo planes and dive bombers, had taken off. Thus three strikes are in the air at the same time. During the day this pattern was to be duplicated and, if the light and weather holds, repeated a third time.

To do the job at Tokyo, "Slew" McCain had three carrier groups totaling ten carriers and six light carriers. The Rear Admirals in command of each group were Thomas L. Sprague, recently graduated from jeep carriers; Jerry Bogan, who loved a fight and a piano equally; and Arthur W. Radford, whose lean, relaxed form was well known throughout the Pacific. Each task group was assigned a definite area of the Tokyo plain, containing a dozen airfields.

The Japs did nothing to stop the whirlwind from the sea. No fighters rose to intercept. Antiaircraft fire was meager. Lieutenant Commander Cliff McDowell said that "when we reached the target, smoke generators at each end of the field started rolling out smoke, but an east wind spread it out so thin that it wasn't effective."

The airfields were spotted with revetted planes, but many of them were straw dummies or unflyable duds surrounded by AA nests. Most of the operational planes were widely dispersed, sometimes as far as five miles from the airfields. And they were well hidden—in tree clumps, under bushes, between village buildings, under trees along streams, beneath haystacks in the fields. Even when heavily strafed, the planes did not burn. The Japanese had at last learned the trick of degassing.

Japan, intent on hoarding its air force, would not be provoked.

But by the end of the day the hoard was cut down by an estimated 109 planes destroyed and 231 damaged, although this total certainly included a number of dummies. The only enemy planes shot out of the air were a couple of snoopers that wandered too close to the Task Force and were hopped by the Combat Air Patrol.

Over three years before, a task force under Halsey had given the dejected Allied world a morale-boosting shot in the arm when it launched Jimmy Doolittle and his squadron of B-25s from the decks of the carrier *HORNET* for the first bombing of Tokyo. When President Roosevelt was asked where the Tokyo bombers had flown from, he laughed and replied: "From Shangri-La, I guess."

Now when "the Bull" returned to Tokyo, not for a darting, hit-and-run raid, but to stay, there was included in his fleet of 104 fighting ships the carrier *SHANGRI-LA*, Slew McCain's flagship.

5

The sky filled with over a thousand silver wings, the Third Fleet was defiant. Broadcasts direct from the ships told the world how the surprised "Kamikaze boys were dying in their beds or scrambling for their holes." Newspaper correspondents for the first time wire-leased their copy from the fleet to the States. On Guam, Nimitz rolled out communiques with the rapidity of a Browning automatic rifle telling not only where the fleet had attacked and what damage had been done, but now also identifying the ships taking part and naming the top commanders. The United States Navy so completely dominated all Japan that it could with impunity dare the enemy to come out and fight.

The attack had been integrated well with the air commands in the Marianas and Okinawa. Since Marcus Island was roughly in the operating area of the Third Fleet, the 21st Bomber Command had sent its B-29s against it to make sure the runways couldn't be used. The day before the carrier attack 320 planes, bombers and fighters, of the Fifth Air Force and the Tactical Air Force, both based on Okinawa, smothered the Kyushu fields. A hundred Army Mustangs flew the long route up from Iwo to do a little spadework in the Tokyo area. The night preceding the carrier attack over 550 B-29s hit at Japanese industrial and refinery centers north and southwest of Tokyo. Coming back the huge sky armada droned over part of the task force.

Then came the carrier attack. Small wonder that the Japanese were groggy.

After the Tokyo raid, to deceive the Japanese as to the whereabouts of the next carrier attack, Marine Corsair fighters and Avenger torpedo planes attacked Kyushu fields on July 11, using strike tactics similar to carriers'. The enemy would think that the carriers had turned their wrath against Kyushu instead of heading north toward virgin territory never before bombed—northern Honshu and southern Hokkaido.

After fueling on July 12 from Admiral Beary's tanker group, which had stood by like faithful seconds to refresh the fighters for the second round, Task Force 38 made ready to bomb—and bombard. But on the 13th, gray, swirling mists shrouded the fleet, and there was nothing to do but wait—and keep a sharp eye to avoid collision.

Next day the fog had thinned into a light haze. Halsey decided to attack.

6

Rear Admiral John F. Shafroth, Jr., his flag in SOUTH DAKOTA, led two more battleships, INDIANA and MASSACHUSETTS, and two cruisers, QUINCY and CHICAGO, plus nine destroyers¹ out of Task Force 38 and headed in toward the coast of Honshu. Their object was to underline the hopelessness of the Japanese cause by a humiliating shore bombardment, something that had not been done since a fleet of British, Dutch, and French men-of-war bombarded Shimonoseki in 1864.

By nine o'clock the gray peaks of Honshu could be seen from the higher platforms of the approaching ships, and with each turn of the screws the morning fog seemed to dissipate more and more. The day would be good for shooting.

A little before eleven, on orders from the flagship, the whole Task Unit went to general quarters. Guns were raised and lowered, turrets swung through their whole arc, communications throughout the ships were tested, radar began tracking assigned points of land. The ships were limbering up for a fight.

As the sound of the general alarm ran throughout the force, a flag hoist was briskly two-blocked at the yardarm of SOUTH DAKOTA: "Never

¹ ERBEN, WALKER, ABBOT, HALE, STEMBEL, BLACK, BULLARD, CHAUNCEY, HEERMAN.

forget Pearl Harbor." Each ship repeated the hoist, as a defiant challenge and a solemn dedication.

By noon everything was in readiness. There was less than 15 miles of sunlit water between the warships and the steel-producing city of Kamaishi. The ragged, saw-toothed peaks and the twisting valleys of northern Honshu were clearly visible.

"We were so close," boasted one boatswain's mate, "that I could have thrown a heaving line ashore with no strain."

At 1210 orders from Shafroth crackled over the TBS: "COMMENCE FIRING WITH MAIN BATTERIES."

Down in main battery plot of SOUTH DAKOTA Seaman i/c Glenn Durnold grabbed two pistol-shaped triggers. With his left hand he sent out the "dit-dit-dah" salvo-warning to all exposed positions on the ship. In the middle of the long "dah" he pressed the right-hand trigger and the first salvo of the war was loosed against the Japanese homeland.

Seconds later the other battleships took up the chorus of destruction. High-explosive shells whistled over the water toward the Imperial Iron and Steel Works' blast furnaces, open-hearth works, and factory buildings.

All the thunder was "Made in U.S.A." Japan did not have the weapons to answer our challenge.

For over two hours the bombardment ships swaggered back and forth, pouring over a thousand tons of steel into the helpless city. At 1416, after SOUTH DAKOTA's forty-second salvo, all ships were ordered to "cease fire," and the force headed out to sea, leaving behind a huge column of dark smoke that rose to blend with the low clouds over Kamaishi.

7

Although the most remote and the most undeveloped of the four Japanese islands, Hokkaido—which literally means "North Sea Road"—possesses many natural resources. Its timber and coal and minerals, its potatoes, beans, flax, dairy products, and fish all were extremely important to the economy of Japan, all were fuel for a voracious war machine that was still running, although most of the cylinders were missing.

All the raw materials from that semifrontier country had to reach Honshu by water, and the shortest route was across Tsugaru Strait.

This strait, lying between the northern tip of Honshu and southern

Hokkaido, is a broad, deep passage about 60 miles long and varies in width from 10 to 30 miles.

The most important traffic in the passage was carried by the railroad ferryboats that ran between Hakodate (population 203,000) in Hokkaido and Aomori (population 99,000) in Honshu, a distance of about 75 miles and a 4½-hour trip. Even in peacetime these ferries ran at full capacity, and with the wartime shortage of ships and the resulting diversion of traffic to this short, protected route, the ferryboats were much overtaxed.

The ferries themselves were specially constructed 350-foot ships of about 3,400 tons and carried 25 freight cars and 940 passengers. Day and night, fair weather and foul, nine ferries shuttled back and forth carrying coal from the Hokkaido mines to be fed into the industrial furnaces of northern Honshu and the Tokyo area.

On the 14th and 15th of July, while the main body of the fleet lay 80 miles offshore, carrier planes severed the ferry line. Five of the boats were sunk, one left beached and burning, the three others damaged.

Navy fliers, denied their primary mission of shooting down Japanese, roamed at will over all northern Japan, leisurely picking "targets of opportunity." Factories, bridges, oil tanks, rail yards, warehouses, light-houses, powerhouses, barracks, radio stations, ammunition depots, canneries, paper mills, and even coal mines were dive-bombed and rocketed. Eighty-four locomotives were destroyed and half as many damaged, 25 merchant ships and 4 armed escort vessels sunk. It was the first time American wrath had been felt on Hokkaido. The deepest B-29 penetration to date had been to Sendai, the southernmost point of the Halsey-McCain strikes and 190 miles north of Tokyo.

The writhing land of Japan was cut off from its northern resources as earlier it had been cut off from the rich lands of the Indies.

Not all the coal and ore of Hokkaido was shipped to Honshu. In the town of Muroran on the southern coast near Tsugaru Strait are the Nihon Steel Company and the Wanishi Iron and Steel Manufacturing Company, and a synthetic oil refinery. Or rather they *were* there—before Halsey decided to throw a few 16-inch shells in that direction.

At dawn on the 15th Muroran awoke to the sound of American salvos. Vice Admiral Oscar C. Badger had brought a heavy bombardment group within sight of the city. Vice Admiral Louis E. Denfeld commanded the battleships WISCONSIN, IOWA, and MISSOURI, with Halsey

aboard the last named. The light cruisers ATLANTA and DAYTON and destroyers REMEY, NORMAN SCOTT, MERTZ, MONSEEN, MCGOWAN, MCNAIR, MELVIN, FRANK KNOX made up the rest of the force.

Muroran is at the head of a deep bay and the heavy gray ships were surrounded on three sides by land, in contempt of what remained of Japanese air power.

Reported one newsman: "It was as if you strutted back and forth on some enemy's front porch, poked in his front door, messed up his parlor and asked him what he proposed to do about it."

The Japanese proposed to do nothing.

Not one aircraft rose from the two fields near Muroran. Not one Kamikaze dropped through the low clouds to crash the impertinent ships. Not one shore gun fired to seaward.

Admiral Denfeld, seeing the undefended target obscured by dust and smoke, signaled from the WISCONSIN's bridge to "take it easy." Accuracy was most important, and in an order reminiscent of the Bunker Hill command "Don't fire till you see the whites of their eyes," Denfeld's gunners were told not to shoot until the spotters could see what they were to hit. There was lots of time.

Admiral Halsey had expected an air attack. When none developed, either during the hour's bombardment or during the retirement when the ships were within plain sight of the enemy for three hours, it meant to Halsey that the Japanese did not have the planes to attack with. Japan was ripe for the taking, just as the Philippines had been the year before.

(After crossing the Atlantic in the cruiser AUGUSTA halfway around the world, President Truman arrived in Berlin for a meeting with Stalin and Churchill. There on July 17, in the Kaiser's former palace at Potsdam, the conference began to decide the fate of prostrate Germany and to plan the final punch against staggering Japan.)

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Fleet into Japan

I

JAPAN'S NAVY still had ships afloat. Whether they could fight or not, or whether they could even move, was not apparent. The fact remained that they were there, on top of the water, and as a "fleet in being," even though it was a thoroughly decimated fleet, they had to be considered in calculating future steps in the war.

The day after the July 10 Tokyo strikes Nimitz sent Halsey a message saying that "the continued existence of remaining Japanese naval forces makes it necessary to use on defensive missions larger naval forces than would otherwise be necessary. The remaining heavy enemy ships must be eliminated . . . This is the responsibility of the Pacific Fleet."

Plans for Russia's entrance into the war were already well laid. To help supply the new ally the U.S. Navy planned to pass convoys from the Aleutians through the Kuriles into the icy Sea of Okhotsk. The route cut square across Japanese waters, and even a few raiding enemy ships would make heavy escorts necessary. So, what was left of the Imperial Fleet definitely had to be put on the bottom.

Most of the remaining units of the Japanese Fleet were hidden in the coves of the Inland Sea near Kure, close by Hiroshima. There was the battleship HARUNA, the most and oftenest "sunk" ship of the communiques, and the hermaphrodite carrier-battleships ISE and HYUGA, fitted with flight decks aft that had never launched planes. There were three carriers: AMAGI, never operated because of shortages of fuel and aircraft, and the equally handicapped KATSURAGI; and the RYUHO, heavily rocketed and bombed in the raid of March 19. There were six cruisers, the heavy TONE and AOBA and the fast light cruisers IWATE, IZUMO, SETTSU and OYODO, flagship of the Commander in Chief of Combined Fleets, veteran Admiral Ozawa.

At the great naval base of Yokosuka on Tokyo Bay was another lush target—the battleship NAGATO. Tied up to the dock and well camouflaged,

she was hard to get at, and well protected with AA guns, as the Third Fleet fliers were soon to find out.

2

On July 17 the Third Fleet augmented by British TF 37, which had arrived from Manus the day before, launched two strikes against the Tokyo airfields but a heavy cloud cover pressed down over the Tokyo plain and only four planes were destroyed on the ground.

On the same day (July 16 on the other side of the date line) the cruiser INDIANAPOLIS started across the Pacific from San Francisco with the world's greatest mystery aboard.

Fifty miles northeast of Tokyo lie the industrial cities of Mito and Hitachi, centers of important ordnance factories and large copper smelters.

Once again Oscar Badger split his bombardment group off from Task Force 38 and headed in toward the rain-draped coast. It was the same group that had swaggered into gun range of Muroran, but this time Louis Denfeld's battleships were increased by three, two American and one British—the NORTH CAROLINA and ALABAMA, and HMS KING GEORGE V. It was the first time that a British-American group had combined to bombard the Japanese homeland.

Because of the light rain and mists the targets could not be seen from the ships, nor from the spotter planes. When the big ships opened up with their first salvos at 11:10 P.M., they had to depend for direction on the electronic yardstick of radar.

The BONHOMME RICHARD, named for the Revolutionary war frigate captained by one J. P. Jones, carried Night Air Group 91 whose mission was to get planes into the air when the other carriers didn't, namely, at night and in bad weather.

On the night of July 17 they had both to contend with.

Lieutenant Commander Howard M. Avery, the Air Group Commander, tells of providing the bombardment group with its night CAP—not to be confused with the traditional ritual of topping-off a good evening. "The weather was stinking. Visibility was terrible and there were winds of 50 to 60 knots over the flight deck. Admiral Badger had sent us a message saying, 'You don't have to give us cover if you don't want to.' That, of course, made me want to show him that we could do it in

spite of the weather. Our boys were well trained and we were out to prove ourselves.

"Four of us—two TBMs and two fighters—flew heckler missions over the Tokyo plain area. When we got over the land at 1,500 feet it was smooth but there was plenty of soup. We circled around and came back to our rendezvous point without seeing anything. Then we took another turn over the plain—at 1,000 feet. There was a break at one spot but we didn't get through.

"Then we went around again at 800 feet. I was in a TBM and I had a fighter piloted by Ensign Henry A. Sohrweid flying with me. We found a hole and below was a town with all the lights on. A lighted train was coming into a station and Sohrweid wanted to make a run on it. I told him to go ahead.

"When I came out of the hole, I found a nice 1,500-foot ceiling over the town. The lights were all on and there was some arc welding going on. I let go some butterfly bombs—that's a bomb composed of about six small explosive and incendiary bombs—and the lights of the town went out immediately—all except the arc welding. So then I dropped some more on the welding lights.

"By this time Sohrweid had made two runs and said he was going in for a third. I never heard from him after that. There were some 3,000-foot mountains behind the town about five minutes away and I think he might have flown into them.

"When I went back to Tamatsukuri—that's the name of the town—after the surrender, I discovered that the arc welding was being done at an airfield and I had put my bombs right on it."

One other fighter pilot, Lieutenant Charles P. Canham, Jr., also failed to return that night. All the others made it—wholly on instruments. Nine planes found the *BONHOMME* in fogbound darkness that hid the ship up to the last 50 yards.

Air Group 91 had proved itself. The months of instrument training and the carefully co-ordinated teamwork had paid dividends. Rear Admiral John J. Ballentine, Commander Carrier Division 7, riding in *BONHOMME RICHARD* and who saw the whole difficult operation, expressed his "admiration for the superb airmanship displayed under flying conditions which would have been extremely dangerous even in daylight."

Over 4,000,000 pounds of hot steel was poured into the factory districts of the two cities by the battleships in the hourlong bombard-

ment. When they had finished, Mito and Hitachi were no longer industrial centers. They were seashore resorts, with the entire populations on enforced vacation.

The next day the weather was still bad but by a little before noon the first strikes could be launched. Main target was Yokosuka Naval Base, specifically the 34,000-ton battleship *NAGATO*.

Camouflaged to look like part of a pier, the veteran battleship was in such position that torpedoes could not be used against her. Dozens of AA batteries poxed the naval base ready to throw up geysers of fire. Smaller ships in the harbor stood by to use their guns in defense of the inert giant.

But the fliers of the Third Fleet came on. Torpedo planes, loaded with fragmentation bombs, went after the AA positions while fighters carrying 1,000-pound armor-piercing bombs dived on *NAGATO*.

The *NAGATO* was not sunk that day—Fate was saving her for an even greater blast at an obscure Pacific atoll called Bikini—but she was badly twisted up. Other ships were less fortunate. One destroyer was blown in two. Another, which was being used as a flak ship, had its stern blown off. Several smaller vessels were also sent gurgling.

While concentrating on the ships at Yokosuka, the airfields of the surrounding countryside were not neglected. Americans destroyed 39 of Japan's plane hoard while the British scratched off 13.

For all this sky-ripping activity a price had to be paid. Americans lost 12 planes and 22 men, mostly to AA fire which was the most intense yet experienced by Third Fleet fliers. The British had two of their planes shot down but both pilots were recovered.

3

As the surface fleet pressed in close to the shores of Japan, the sub-surface fleet pressed even closer. By this stage of the war juicy targets were a rarity for the submariners. The days of astronomical tonnages sunk during a war patrol were over. In July many of the submarines that hugged the coasts and nosed into the bays were not looking primarily for ships. Theirs was a more humane mission. They were looking for downed aviators.

One of the many lifeguard submarines fringing the Home Islands was the *GABILAN* (Commander William B. Parham), which, during the July

10 strikes on Tokyo, had picked up nine pilots and crewmen, two of them from so deep inside Sagami Nada that her skipper, Commander Parham, concluded that they "could recover pilots from the Imperial Palace moat itself if we had enough fighter cover."

Again, after the July 18 strikes against the NAGATO, the submarine hauled four more airdales out of Japanese home waters. That night she was thanked for such fine service in a most peculiar way.

At 2045—8:45 P.M.—GABILAN got word that a detachment of cruisers and destroyers would sweep in toward Cape Mojima and bombard the radar installation there. The submarine was ordered out of the area; Parham doubted whether he could stay out of radar range of the fast-stepping bombardment group. And he was right.

About a half an hour before midnight radars of the cruiser-destroyer group¹ picked up a blip that might have been a scurrying Japanese ship if it hadn't been the submarine galloping to get out of the area. The destroyers W. L. LIND and HANK opened up with their 5-inch batteries.

Parham logged: "Our two friends opened up with rapid fire, range 12,800 yards. At first shot we fired a rocket and then flashed them correct recognition signal."

In the excitement the signals were not recognized and the destroyers continued on in, their guns blazing.

There was nothing left for GABILAN to do but go under—quick. In spite of the rather irritating predicament of being shelled by his own people, Parham still had enough objectivity to give credit where credit was due: "The boys are really good. Shells are landing all around."

The next day GABILAN calmly rendezvoused with the submarine RUNNER and swapped 15 unhappy aviators for two movies, some canned milk, and a box of flares.

4

The Pacific had become an American lake to the very bays of Japan. The fleet went where it pleased, when it pleased, and stayed as long as it pleased. The mobility of sea power had reached its zenith.

Now, a fleet is no more independent of its line of supply than a horse is of his oats. Flexible operations depend on flexible logistics. And flexible

¹ Task Unit 35.4 (Rear Admiral Carl F. Holden): light cruisers TOPEKA, ATLANTA, DAYTON, OKLAHOMA CITY; destroyers ENGLISH, C. S. SPERRY, AULT, WALDRON, J. W. WEEKS, HANK, BORIE, W. L. LIND.

logistics meant Service Squadron 6, whose service and supply ships hovered within rendezvousing range of the fleet always ready to rearm, recoil, and reprovision the combatant ships.

Heart of the squadron and Admiral Donald B. Beary's flagship was the old light cruiser DETROIT (sister of the MARBLEHEAD, which made the memorable voyage halfway around the world without a rudder, and the MILWAUKEE, lend-leased to Russia and rechristened MURMANSK). Surrounding her were from 40 to 70 ships, the number varying as some continually shuttled back and forth to the supply bases. There were from two to three dozen oilers; stores ships carrying fresh and dry provisions, clothing, ship's store stock (as varied as the corner drugstore's), electronic equipment, and medical supplies; ammunition ships; tugs; destroyers and destroyer escorts; a hospital ship, which, because it was illuminated at night in accordance with the Geneva convention, trailed behind, just over the horizon. And, of course, escort carriers doing the double duty of protecting the service fleet and supplying the big flat-tops with fresh pilots, crewmen, and planes.

This new method of full-scale support at sea while underway was born of necessity—geographical necessity. The fleet had to operate over a vast sea-desert in the Western Pacific, hundreds and thousands of miles from the bases of supply. To keep a steady pressure against the enemy, to keep the Empire groggy without time to recuperate or re-equip, it was necessary to extend the supply pipe lines to the operating area itself. Service Squadron 6 was the flexible hose attached to the spigots of Samar, Guam, Saipan, and Pearl Harbor.

The new organization was welded together in December, 1944, by Admiral Beary. The first real test of the service squadron came during the Iwo campaign, when, among other things, ammunition was transferred at sea for the first time. Then came Okinawa, where the squadron stayed at sea for 94 days. When the Third Fleet returned to sweep the Home Islands from the cold black waters off Hokkaido to the hidden coves of the Inland Sea, the service ships waited just out of bomber range in Empire waters, ready to minister to the hard-working, high-flying task force.

After the heavy strikes on Yokosuka Naval Base, Task Force 38 once again disappeared beyond the eastern horizon leaving the Japanese to worry about where the next blow would fall. Once again the combatant ships met the service squadron and during the two and a half days from July 20 to July 22 the largest fueling, replenishment, and rearming opera-

tion ever undertaken at sea was accomplished. The job was done by 15 oilers, 5 ammunition ships, 2 attack transports, 1 provision storeship, 1 cargo ship, and 3 escort carriers.

Early in the morning TBS messages from the task force immediately started filling the air channels with lists of requirements—the modern, seagoing version of calling up the local grocery store for a delivery. A typical fueling and provisioning day of a typical carrier started at dawn when the tankers were met.

“Man all stations and communications for fueling from tanker, starboard side,” the bull horn would blare. One by one the ships took their turns drinking from assigned tankers, “sucking cider through a straw.” As the ship ahead finished, the next one would move slowly abreast the leisurely moving tanker, lines would shoot across the water gap, and soon a web of provisioning lines, hoses, a towing pendant, telephone lines, and distance line linked the two ships in a multi-umbilical embrace. As the two ships rolled in the swells, the lines would sag low to decapitate frothy waves and then stretch taut as the ships rolled apart. The job of seamanship at times like this was ticklish, for the ships had to stay close enough so that the lines wouldn’t part, yet far enough away to avoid collision. Invariably the best quartermasters were always on the helm.

The lucky men with orders back to the States rode the “trolley” across to the tanker for the trip home. Others rode across to replace them.

In about two hours the “oil king” would hold up his hand and say “Enough.” Hose connection would be broken, lines would be retrieved, and the carrier would slowly pull away.

Then, perhaps, the ammunition ship.

“The smoking lamp is out.”

Ammunition, bombs, rockets came dangling across the rushing waters. The question uppermost in everyone’s mind during the operation always was “What would happen if the Japs came now?” Fortunately they never did.

When the ship went alongside a cargo ship for stores and fresh provisions, long strings of working parties lined up to strike the grub below. It was good, sweaty work, but there were compensations, for invariably a few crates of oranges and apples “broke apart.”

But the crown of the day was when a tin can headed toward the ship and the horn announced: “Stand by to receive destroyer for transfer of—U.S. MAIL!”

enemy territory, an interruption in the strike routine, a chance to sit in the shade and relax. And to make it complete, perhaps the word would be passed: "There will be no routine general quarters tonight . . ."

The amount of supplies furnished the Third Fleet in the brief 2½-day period is almost incomprehensible to one used to driving into a filling station for five or ten gallons of gas, or buying the family's pork chops from the corner butcher, or purchasing a couple of dozen shotgun shells before a quail outing.

Enough fuel oil was pumped into the steel bellies of the fleet to fill 15 miles of tank cars—379,157 barrels. Enough provisions, not only dry staples but also such Pacific delicacies as eggs, butter, fresh fruit and fresh meat to feed a city the size of Santa Fe, New Mexico, for thirty days. Over a thousand passengers and replacement personnel were spirited across from ship to ship in boatswain's chairs. The morale of the fleet was flipped mile-high by 5,822 bags of mail. Ninety-nine planes, enough for a large carrier, were flown from the escorts to their fighting sisters. The ticklish job of transferring 6,369 tons of ammunition, enough for four or five good bombardments of the type so recently engaged in, was performed without accident. Add to this list 555,000 gallons of aviation gas, 170 tons of general stores, 38 tons of freight, and 2,000 barrels of diesel oil and one has a still incomplete picture of how voracious a fleet can be, how dependent on the farms and factories of the American interior.

Small wonder that Halsey sent a message to Admiral Beary saying: "Well done to all hands for tossing more beans, bullets, and bug juice than has ever been done before in the same time . . . Your boys have a direct hand in every bomb and bullet that we are able to drop on the Nips."

5

On July 24 the Third Fleet was out to get what remained of the Japanese Navy at Kure.

For a change the fliers found good weather over the Inland Sea and they made the most of it. As with the *NAGATO*, most of the ships were anchored in waters where they could not be torpedoed, so it was bombs and rockets and bullets for them, beginning before breakfast and lasting steadily all day.

The battleship-carrier *ISE* was hit five times and settled considerably

by the bow. Her sister *HYUGA* took twice as many hits plus over two dozen near misses and was grounded shortly after the attack. The *HARUNA* of the charmed life, still keeping her luck, was hit only once and was not much damaged. The carrier *AMAGI* had bombs dropped all around her but only one hit, while *KATSURAGI*, another carrier, which was well camouflaged nearby, escaped without a scratch. The *RYUHO*, a carrier, newly moored and heavily camouflaged, was not even discovered. The heavy cruiser *TONE* received a number of telling hits and had to be beached. The *OYODO*, a light cruiser and flagship of the Commander in Chief Combined Fleet—the Japanese *Nimitz*—took four direct hits and many near misses and was left listing to starboard. The heavy cruiser *AOBA* flooded from a near miss and settled to the bottom. Of the three old cruisers bedded down in the area, *IWATE* and *SETTSU* settled to the mud while *IZUMO*, well camouflaged, received no damage.

Airfields, too, received their share of attention. Nagoya, Osaka at the eastern end of the Inland Sea, and Miho were thoroughly shot up and for the first time during the month a number of gassed planes were found on the fields.

Night fighters and torpedo planes from *BONHOMME RICHARD* took up where the day carriers left off, and also that night the light cruisers *PASADENA*, *SPRINGFIELD*, *WILKES-BARRE*, and *ASTORIA*, plus the destroyers *CUSHING*, *COLAHAN*, *UHLMANN*, *BENHAM*, *WEDDERBURN*, and *STOCKHAM*, kept up the pressure with a high-speed sweep across the eastern entrance to the Inland Sea. Only a small picket boat was found, so with daylight the same ships bombarded the Kushimoto seaplane base and the Shiomi-saki airfield on the southernmost tip of Honshu.

Next morning regular strikes were resumed. For the first time the Japanese tried to retaliate. Four torpedo-carrying *Graces* were shot down, three by the British, while approaching the fleet.

The Japs also decided to mix it in the air. Near Nagoya American fighters were jumped by 15 Franks and Tonys, Japanese Army fighters. Seven were shot down, however, while another crashed head-on with a *Hellcat*, disintegrating both.

Ensign Herb Law of Air Group 31, flying from *BELLEAU WOOD*, was leveling off from a dive on the enemy airfield when bullets began to rip through his plane.

"My first thought was that it was AA," he explained, when he had the chance, weeks later. "Much to my surprise there was a Jap plane directly

behind me in the saddle, hitting me with every bullet he fired. Where the hell he came from, I'll never know.

"Something that felt like a 5-inch shell hit me in the left leg. The Jap did a wing-over and came back directly at me. At that point my engine decided to cut out completely.

"I was too low to bail out and he was hitting me with everything he had while I looked around for a place to land. It sounded like hailstones. My plane was smoking so violently I couldn't even see the instrument panel. To see and to keep from choking, I pushed back the canopy.

"My hydraulic system was gone, so I had to land wheels up, but more important—flaps up. I didn't have much choice as to where I would land, but I came in fairly well.

"When I stepped out of the plane, which was still smoking heavily, I saw that it was riddled with holes. I sat on the wing and looked at my leg, which was bleeding pretty badly. As I was putting a bandage on, a woman ran out from the bushes and fired at me from about thirty feet with a pistol. She missed and ran away. Within ten minutes the Japs had me. They disrobed and bound me and I was taken to several places ending up that night in Osaka.

"The treatment was terrible. I had no food or water for three days. I was beaten with clubs, fists, leather straps and, in general, used as a judo guinea pig. Among other choice tortures I had burning cigarettes put to my lips. It's surprising what a man can take and still live."

For the Third Fleet, though, it had been a good two days. Over a quarter of a million tons of enemy warships had been either sunk or badly damaged. A hundred planes had been smashed on the ground and 31 swatted out of the sky, in addition to messing up of various and assorted ground targets and sinking several score small cargo vessels in the Inland Sea. The price paid was 32 planes, almost enough to fill a light carrier.

Not all the pilots were lost, however, for by this stage of the war the pilot rescue system was as effective as an alert lifeguard at an indoor swimming pool. In addition to the guarding submarines and the alert surface ships, big Dumbo flying boats from the Fleet Air Wings cruised the fighting area ready to land on the water and pick up anything that spoke English, be it with a Yorkshire accent or a southern drawl.

A couple of fighter planes usually guarded these sturdy but slow-flying boats and on the afternoon of this second day of strikes Lieutenant William F. Smith and Ensign John G. Selway of *BONHOMME RICHARD* flew CAP for a sea-searching Dumbo. Late in the afternoon word was

received that a downed flier had been spotted at the western end of the Inland Sea. A quick glance at fuel showed Smith and Selway that they would not have enough gas to get back to their retiring carrier if they went with the Dumbo. Yet the Dumbo could not lay itself open to Jap attack by landing on the Inland Sea without fighter cover.

The two fliers did not hesitate long: "Go ahead. We'll cover you." and they did. The grateful flier was located and picked up. The three planes then flew to the Bungo Suido, the entrance to the Inland Sea between the islands of Kyushu and Shikoku. By this time it was dark and the moon threw a white, gauzy light across the smooth water.

All three planes put down easily. The Hellcats quickly sank but their two pilots were safely taken aboard the big plane they had protected so long and were flown south to more friendly waters.

6

On July 28 the coup de grâce was given to the Japanese Fleet.

Once again the fliers from Task Force 38 smashed at what remained of the battered hulks near Kure. Although most of the ships were irreparably damaged, this was not completely evident from the air. Some were partially flooded while others rested upright on the shallow bottom, but from the air they looked as if they might possibly become a nuisance again. Nimitz wanted to make sure that Japan did not have one capital ship that might interfere with the coming operations against the Home Islands.

The attacks were concentrated on the battleship *HARUNA*. From eight in the morning till five in the afternoon carrier planes hit her again and again. Far Eastern Air Force B-24s flying from Okinawa fields also added their punches between carrier strikes but unfortunately swung wide. Even the *HARUNA* luck could not hold out against such wrath and the ship settled to the shallow bottom, her turrets just above the water.

The *ISE*, too, received a shower of bombs and settled to the bottom. Again the B-24s tried but missed. They connected, however, with the heavy cruiser *AOBA*, which was already on the bottom, and blew her stern off.

The carrier *AMAGI*, already leaking from the July 24 raid, had more of her seams ripped and slowly eased to starboard, coming to rest on her side.

The *OYODO*, *TONE*, and *IZUMO* were polished off.

The carrier *KATSURAGI* had its flight deck bulged by two 1,000-pound

bombs but her hull fortunately remained undamaged; "fortunately," because she soon had to be used to repatriate Japanese from overseas, a detail to which no one gave a thought at the moment.

The only ship not damaged was the carrier RYUHO, undiscovered under her camouflage.

By the end of the day Japan, once the third largest sea power in the world, barely ranked ahead of Ireland.

Exuberantly, triumphantly Halsey messaged his fleet: "Mark well this day the twenty-eighth of July. To the Dumbos and the Lifeguards, to CAP and the men of the surface team, to the valiant British force on the right flank—well done! For the flying fighters who fought it out over Japan to a smashing victory, I have no words that can add to the record with their courage, their blood, and their lives."

The night of the demise of the Japanese Fleet was calm and clear and well lighted by a bright moon. Admiral Shafroth again took his ships, the same that had bombarded Kamaishi during daylight two weeks before, plus the cruisers BOSTON and ST. PAUL and the destroyer SUTHERLAND, in toward the coast of Japan. The British were there, too, with Admiral Rawlings' flagship HMS KING GEORGE V and three destroyers. Capping the operation were the night fliers from the hard-working BONHOMME RICHARD.

The target this time was the key port, rail, and industrial center of Hamamatsu, 120 miles southwest of Tokyo.

One of the targets destroyed was the Japan Musical Instrument Company, which was assigned to the battleship MASSACHUSETTS ("Mamie" to her crew). "The attack," her log reads, "was not an advanced form of musical criticism but arose from the fact that the factory had been converted to the manufacture of aircraft propellers."

Having expended the customary 1,000 tons of steel in the right direction, the ships once again slipped out to sea. Halsey, as usual, was quick to congratulate and quick to coin an apt phrase. He dubbed the ships "The Hammer Hamamatsu Club."

Air strikes were continued the next day but once again the weather closed in over the Tokyo area and many of the planes were diverted clear across Honshu to the naval base of Maizuru on the Sea of Japan. Not a cove, not an inlet, not an isolated rice paddy was now safe from the long-stretching fist of the Third Fleet.

Now even destroyers, those versatile ships of many parts, took on the

additional job of penetrating Japanese waters where even submarines had not fared.

(A wistful word about DDs, the letter carriers and omnibuses for the fleet when it replenished at sea; they took up station far in advance of task forces to warn of approaching enemy planes; they screened the bigger ships against lurking submarines; they threw up clouds of shrapnel when the Kamikazes tried to get through to the big boys; they fished many a dripping aviator out of the drink; they held their torpedoes ready for any enemy ship that might happen within range. For a battleship or a cruiser to go steam under the shadows of the cliffs of Japan and defiantly spit at point-blank range was feat enough, but for the tin-thin destroyers to do the same thing—well, that took a strong set of entrails.)

On the night of July 30 Desron 25¹ hitched up its belt and headed into the jaws of Suriga Wan, to snare any shipping that might have escaped the carrier hawks and to finish off the aluminum plants of Shimizu Town.

On the way in a small picket boat was contacted on radar, but left unmolested. Desron 25 had more grandiose plans for announcing its presence.

Deeper and deeper into the bay it went, following the shore past Shimizu Town, only three miles away. At three minutes past midnight the destroyers opened a 4-minute rapid-fire bombardment of the city's aluminum plants and railroad yards. Her guns blazing at the city, DASHIELL fired two torpedoes to sink a 2,000-ton cargo vessel on the opposite beam. During the squadron's flank speed retirement JOHN RODGERS and MCKEE, leading the column, disposed of the picket boat that had been seen earlier.

Try as it might the Japanese press could not explain such happenings as this. The attempts had a hollow ring, for who now could really believe that the Americans were "wandering about in Japanese home waters not knowing what to do and afraid to land on Japan."

7

The Japanese people were numb. Forbidden by Imperial decree to think for themselves, death being the penalty for holding even unspoken "dangerous thoughts," they yearned to Tokyo for guidance.

¹ JOHN RODGERS, RINGGOLD, DASHIELL, SCHROEDER, MCKEE, HARRISON, and MURRAY.

None came. The government also was benumbed.

On June 20 the Emperor asked the Soviet government if it would receive Prince Konoye as a special ambassador to "make an improvement in relations between Russia and Japan, and . . . to ask U.S.S.R. to intercede with the United States to stop the war."

Moscow answered curtly that Stalin and Molotov were making ready to leave for the conference in Potsdam with President Truman and Prime Minister Churchill. The special embassy would have to wait until the conference was finished.

The grim implication was horribly obvious.

Then on June 26 the Potsdam Declaration was received at the palace: "We, the President of the United States, the President of the Republic of China and the Prime Minister of Great Britain . . . have conferred and agreed that Japan shall be given the opportunity to end this war."

Unconditional surrender.

"Accept it," counseled all the Cabinet, but one. And that one held more power than all the rest—War Minister Anami.

Anami knew that Japan's situation was hopeless. He had not demurred when the peace mission to Moscow was proposed, but he did not inform his military staff of the intended overtures.

The demand for surrender, however, could not be concealed, and the Army said it could not be accepted. Everything might be lost but honor; unconditional surrender would cost Japan that, too.

The Army was undefeated, it claimed. To be sure, there was Guadalcanal, and New Guinea and Luzon. Those were campaigns. An army can lose campaigns and still win a war. And if it cannot win a war, it can go down fighting, even if it had to fight less honorable members of its own nation . . .

Any receptiveness to the Potsdam Declaration, it was made very plain in the deeply intoned phrases of classically formal Japanese, would mean death to the cowards. The Allies' demand was rejected.

Then came the great white light over Hiroshima on August 6.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Atomic Dawn

I

"EARLY ON Monday morning July 16, 1945, at 0530, reveille went for all hands of the INDIANAPOLIS to get out of their sacks and make preparations for getting underway," related an anonymous sailor. "At 0615 chow was down and everyone was ready to make ready for sea. At 0800 right on schedule we brought in our last mooring line and were underway. We went under the Golden Gate bridge at 0836, saying goodbye to the good old U.S.A. for only a short time for some of us—and forever for many others.

"The evening before we left, about 1700, a big wooden box was brought aboard. None of the crew knew what this box contained. It was guarded from the time it came aboard until it was taken off. We knew it was something very important because we were going to make a high-speed run to Tinian.

"After we were clear of the last buoys, the skipper gave orders to flank speed and in a few minutes we were making 28 knots . . ."

Thus the atomic bomb started its epochal journey to Hiroshima.

But if the men aboard INDIANAPOLIS didn't know what was in the well-guarded crate their ship was carrying, Navy Captain William Sterling Parsons certainly did. For two years he had been connected with the most secret project of the war and he was slated to be in the plane that was to carry the bomb to Japan.

"We figured for months ahead of time," said Parsons, "on having the bombs ready. The products of Oak Ridge and Hanford were accumulating at an increasing rate. That is the reason that when the INDIANAPOLIS took on board the larger nuclear component of the Hiroshima bomb, the final nuclear part of the weapon had not even reached Los Alamos in the form of chemical soup.

"General Groves and Admiral William R. Purnell selected the INDIANAPOLIS to do the carrying job. They wanted nothing less than a

cruiser and they thought that something larger would be more vulnerable. The hardware of the bomb was already on Tinian.

"I went to San Francisco around the latter part of June and on July 4 I took off for Tinian, arriving there on the 8th. I stayed there for four days, to see that all preparations had been made for the bomb. I had good reports from the people there, but before reporting everything in readiness to General Groves, I wanted to see for myself. I wanted to see that the weapon assembly facilities were all set and that they dovetailed with the huge B-29 establishment at the north field on Tinian. As I said, I wanted to see with my own eyes before I told General Groves all was all right."

At Tinian in command of the 509th Composite Group, part of the 313th Wing of the Twentieth Air Force, was a young colonel, Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., by name. Tibbets had started the war in Europe where he flew one of the first B-17s in that theater. His outfit then was the 97th Bombardment Group (Heavy) and he piloted one of the twelve planes in the first Allied Heavy Bombardment raid across the English Channel. Later he was in on the North African show and among other things drew the job of flying Eisenhower to Gibraltar and Mark Clark to Algiers.

"I came back from Europe in 1943," related Tibbets, "after 25 missions and started running accelerated service tests on B-29s. I was in on the initial flying of the B-29s. During this period I gathered up my men. They were all extremely proficient and we worked together for three years, from 1943 to 1945. I had a nucleus of selected individuals and I built around them.

"I was charged by the Air Force with developing an organization for carrying the bomb. I was to work out the techniques and tactics for employment of the bomb. I had an added duty of determining the modifications necessary for the airplanes and getting them done. In other words, I had to fit the airplane and the bomb together. There was two weeks' delay in the testing of the first bomb in New Mexico, and when it took place, I was already with my men in the Marianas."

Parsons continues his story: "All during my trip to the Marianas the thing foremost in my mind was that around July 15 the first bomb was to be tested in New Mexico. After my Tinian inspection I arrived back in the States on July 13 and went directly to Los Alamos. There I found the people keyed up to the limit getting everything ready.

"The bomb was fired 200 miles south of Los Alamos early in the

morning of July 16. Busses took the senior staff members from Los Alamos to the testing grounds. I didn't go with them for I was to ride in one of the two B-29s over the shot.

"The weather was bad and we were waiting to see if it would clear. The thunderstorm finally cleared up and it was decided to fire at 4:30 A.M. We took off at 4:00 A.M. Clouds were hiding the ground. The time of firing was postponed, first to 5:00 A.M. and then to 5:30 A.M. We were barely able to make out the ground. Tension began to build up in our plane especially when we began hearing 'minus 20 minutes . . . minus 15 minutes . . .' in the dark up there.

"Then through a hole in the clouds we saw the tremendous flash. It was 36 minutes before sunrise but we could make out the mushroom cloud as it rose toward the stratosphere. We circled the cloud in the dawn. It was cut up by crosswinds and was becoming indistinct when we abandoned it. We had estimated that the explosion would take the form of a great ball of fire, glowing and expanding. We had thought that it would go up to the stratosphere unless there was an inversion and then it might be checked. There was an inversion at about 15,000 feet (20,000 feet from sea level) but the cloud bounced right through and went on up. A crosswind caught it and sliced it in two, sending clouds in two directions.

"When I got back to the Albuquerque airport I saw a group of western-looking people in a car, all wearing cattlemen hats. They were the top scientists from Washington—Bush, Conant and Tolman. They had been up all night and were keeping awake with coffee. Conant remarked that the scientific part of the job was now a success—that puts it up to 'you people,' meaning the overseas delivery group. Then we went back to Los Alamos."

News of the success of the bomb was immediately flashed to Potsdam, where President Truman was conferring with the Allied heads of state. With him was Secretary of War Stimson, the man directly responsible to the President for the administration of the entire atomic undertaking. Stimson felt that the United States now had a weapon that would shock the Japanese into surrender. Although thousands of noncombatants would be killed by atomic explosion, it was felt the cost would be cheaper—certainly for the Americans and even for the Japanese—than an invasion. The unanswerable argument for peace of the bomb's world-changing blast would serve Japan as a national face-saving scapegoat.

So it was decided to use the bomb if, after solemn warning, the Japanese refused to surrender.

Kyoto, Hiroshima, Kokura, and Niigata were the four original cities reserved for "special attack." But at the last minute a substitution was made. With the President's approval, Stimson took Kyoto off the list, since that ancient capital of Japan was an internationally historic shrine of art and culture. Nagasaki was picked as a substitute.

2

"In New Mexico," continued Parsons, "we were all anxious to get the results of the shot and find out just how successful it had been. From July 16 to 22 we assembled the evidence and I then went west with my briefcase full of movies and enlarged photographs to show Nimitz and LeMay, who were anxiously waiting on Guam."

The INDIANAPOLIS, meanwhile, had clipped across the Pacific at flank speed, setting a new speed record for the run between San Francisco and Pearl Harbor. There she stopped for only three hours to take on fuel before shoving off for Tinian. "She anchored in the harbor off Tinian about 1100 on July 26," continued Captain Parsons. "In a short time there were boats of all kinds coming alongside and gold braid coming aboard. There were all sorts of scrambled eggs from Commanders to Admirals and Colonels to Generals. About an hour after she anchored, the big box was hoisted out on the quarterdeck and into a barge, the crew still not knowing what it contained." (Nor did most of the gold braid present, it might be added.)

"After stopping at Guam to show my pictures," continued Parsons, "I went to Tinian on the 26th of July. The INDIANAPOLIS had just unloaded the bomb. Two days later the remaining nuclear parts for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs arrived in C-54s. These parts were the only cargo of the planes.

"On the afternoon of August 1 all preparations were complete. This included a complete rehearsal of the Hiroshima delivery. We had flown in B-29s to Iwo and back—making a distance of 1,500 miles, the distance to Hiroshima—and had dropped a complete dummy bomb off Tinian. So on August 2 we were ready to deliver. But the weather kept us waiting until August 6."

(Tibbets: "All of us were in the Pentagon in April, 1945—Groves,

Arnold, Wilson, Von Harmon, and an old Norwegian, an air mass analysis expert. At that time the Norwegian said we would have weather O.K. for bombing the target selected over a 3-day stretch and he gave August 6 as the date. That's the way it turned out. It was in this same conference that the targets were selected.")

Parsons: "During the period of the wait we must have annoyed General LeMay terrifically. Each afternoon at one o'clock he got a weather briefing after reports had been gathered in from all over—from Russia, from China, from the Philippines. Then by 1:30 he would make his decision as to whether or not the flight would be made that day. We would call him up in the morning and ask him what about the flight; do we or don't we? At least if it were definite that we were not, to tell us, for we said we had a lot to do besides standing around on pins and needles. But General LeMay refused to make a decision before all the evidence was in.

"Then about 1:45 in the afternoon of August 5, we got the decision: We would go in on the early morning of the 6th.

"We loaded the bomb late in the afternoon of August 5. Needless to say we had to be very, very careful after that. It would have been awkward having a fire break out and the plane burn up with the bomb in it.

"Commander Albert F. Birch, who is a professor of physics at Harvard, had done the development engineering on the Hiroshima bomb. Two months before, at Los Alamos, he had proposed that the final assembling of the bomb be done after take-off. But Oppenheimer, Groves, and I disapproved of this. We thought that it was too easy for something to go wrong—a tool, for example, might be lost or misplaced or forgotten.

"After we arrived in Tinian our crowd began to worry after seeing several B-29s crash in take-offs from the south field. Several suggested that I do the assembly job after take-off. I did not want to have tension building up in our crowd, so I decided to do the job."

(Tibbets: "No, I wasn't worried about taking off with the bomb. After all Parsons had to go along too, and if it was all right with him, it was all right with me. That's the way it worked all the way through. There was mutual confidence. I never questioned the work others did in their particular part of the project. I always accepted their decisions and they mine. The whole thing was the slickest deal ever worked out. With all sorts of agencies involved, both military and civilian, there was no evidence of squabbles.")

Parsons: "There were to be three B-29s on the flight. At 2:45 A.M., about half an hour after a tropical rain, our B-29 took off first.¹ There were no particular worries. Everything was normal, except that we did have to fly at a muggy 4,000 feet until dawn to avoid close quarters with 600 B-29s returning from a raid on Japan. They were up at a cool 10,000.

"I assembled the bomb after take-off. There was no trouble. I took plenty of time for the assembly job. There was no reason to hurry. We had plenty of time. I ended up with a pair of dirty, greasy hands, just as if I had changed the carburetor and distributor of my car.

"Our only secure radio frequency was our VHF which is O.K. for short distances. Our range was particularly low that morning because we were flying at 4,000 feet. The people on the ground had asked: 'Is he finished assembling?' Tibbets had replied: 'He's not through yet. He's still working.' When I did finish, we were just out of VHF range, so the people back on the ground were left worrying.

"After that we ate breakfast all the way to Iwo. It was about dawn then. We climbed to 10,000 feet and rendezvoused with our other two planes. As we headed in for the Empire, we were six minutes behind schedule. But we picked up those six minutes going in."

(Tibbets: "On the way up I was worried only about the mechanical things of the flight, about keeping those four fans ticking until we got there. But everything clicked off like clockwork. Actually it was the dulllest trip anyone ever took, everything went perfectly according to plan. Even the bomb exploded within fifteen seconds of the time we had planned six months before.

"It was pure old routine stuff. We were in the clouds most of the way to Iwo. There was rain and a few bumps but you would get more flying from Washington to Los Angeles. I, of course, had known about the atomic bomb since I started working on the project on the 1st day of September, 1944. The Bombardier, Ferebee [Major Thomas W.], knew. Van Kirk [Major Theodore J.], the Navigator, knew but wasn't particularly interested. He knew it was something big but he's the sort that didn't give a damn. He was a navigator: 'Where do you want to go and

¹ Crew of the bomb-carrying B-29: Col. Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., USA—pilot; Capt. William S. Parsons, USN—bomb commander and weaponer; Maj. Theodore Van Kirk, USA—navigator; Maj. Thomas W. Ferebee, USA—bombardier; Capt. Robert A. Lewis, USA—copilot; 1st Lt. Morris Jeppson—weaponer; Staff Sgt. Wyatt E. Dusenbury—engineer; Sgt. Joseph A. Steiborik—radar; 1st Lt. Jacob W. Besser—radio countermeasures; Sgt. Robert H. Shumard—assistant engineer; Sgt. Richard N. Nelson—radio operator; T. Sgt. George R. Caron—tail gunner.

when do you want to get there?" Incidentally both Ferebee and Van Kirk had been with me in Europe.

("After we were airborne I went back in the end of the plane and started explaining the thing to the men back there. Parsons did the same thing up front. Caron, the tail gunner, who is a pretty sharp type, kinda suspected that that was what it was. He wasn't too surprised. He said that he remembered that back before the war people were talking about driving ships with atomic fuel and he sort of suspected that something like that might be in the bomb. The other two men just sort of raised their eyebrows. There wasn't much conversation. Two or three days before the flight Parsons had given the crew of the plane a quick briefing and showed them the colored stills of the New Mexico explosion. They all knew it was to be some terrific sort of explosion.

("We got to Iwo about daybreak. We circled three times and rendezvoused with the other two planes. Then a little after Iwo we started up. Van Kirk would tell me to climb such and such or go such and such a speed and I would do it.

("We had sent three other weather planes ahead to report on conditions over the three possible targets [Hiroshima, Kokura, and Nagasaki]. Fifty miles off the Jap coast, at a point where we could have headed for any one of them, we got the results. Hiroshima was the best and, since that was our first choice anyway, that made the decision easy.")

3

Parsons: "When we got off the Empire, we climbed to high altitude for delivery. Before doing so, however, my assistant—a young Signal Corps first lieutenant by the name of Morris Jeppson—and I armed the bomb. We did this first because once we got to our full altitude we didn't want to depressurize the plane to do the arming.

"We proceeded toward the target exactly according to plan. For the last fifty miles we could see a big hole in the clouds over the target. We were having maximum good luck and the Japanese were having the maximum bad luck. The navigation of Major Van Kirk was perfect. We were on schedule to the exact minute.

"Then we arrived in sight of Hiroshima.

"On this mission I was General Groves's representative and my title was Bomb Commander and Weaponeer. It was agreed that I should have

final authority in case of any deviation from the plan. I was not to have tactical authority, however. For instance, if Hiroshima had been closed in, I would have had to make the decision whether to drop the bomb by radar, or whether to bomb one of the other assigned targets. But as luck would have it there were no awkward decisions. It was a parade. Tibbets turned to me and said, 'Do you agree that's the target?' I nodded 'Yes.'

"One of the B-29s peeled off early and circled. He was to come in five or ten miles behind us to take photos. The other B-29 stayed on our beam. It was to drop pressure gauges after we dropped the bomb. He was to turn off when we transmitted a radio buzz as we dropped the bomb."

(Tibbets: "It was a bit hazy coming in but at about 20 miles Ferebee picked up the target. It was about a 3- or 4-minute run. We headed straight in on our original course, that's how good Van Kirk's navigating was. Then I gave it to Ferebee on the automatic pilot. 'O.K. I got it,' he said. He sat there looking through his periscope with his arms dangling down beside him. For the last minute and a half he never touched the bombsight. After we dropped the bomb we did a roundhouse turn to get out of the shock wave . . .")

Parsons: "About a minute and a half later we felt the shock waves. There were two strong shocks about two seconds apart. Tibbets shouted: 'We're in flak!' But from the timing I knew it wasn't. 'No, no,' I replied. 'That's not flak. That's IT! We're in the clear now.'"

(Tibbets: "When the shock wave hit us the plane was in a bank. The plane snapped like a tin roof, but there was more noise than shock. The plane went into a steeper bank and at first I thought we had got some flak under our high wing. But I looked out and there was no smoke. Then of course we had time to think and realize it was the shock wave from the bomb.

("Twice we made our S-shaped maneuvers taking pictures with our two cameras, one in the nose and one in the tail. We were never closer than a mile from the cloud, but we were close enough to watch it boil. It turned many different colors—orange and blue and gray. It was like looking over a tar barrel boiling. There was lots of black smoke and dust and rubble that gave the appearance of boiling. We couldn't see the city at all through the thick layer of dust [later estimated to be 1500 or 2000 feet thick] nor could we see the fires beneath. A circle of dust outlined the area of destruction. We could, however, pick out the docks on the waterfront")

Parsons: "After taking all the pictures we could think of and satisfying ourselves as to the results, we headed for home. Then we made our reports. The Bombardier, Major Ferebee, who had done an excellent job, got his report off first using an Air Force code. In his report, which none of us saw or checked, he used the code word for 'good' instead of the one for 'excellent' to describe the results. Meanwhile I got my report off using 'Affirm line 1, 2, 6 and 9,'¹ which meant that the results were excellent—the best possible in fact. This somewhat confused the people on the ground. Two hours later we got a query on the bombardier's statement, so he changed it to 'excellent.' Tibbets kidded him on it saying, 'What do you want for your money?' "

¹ TOP SECRET

4 August 1945

PARSONS ("judge")
to
FARRELL

SPECIAL TABLE

Affirm
Line

1. Clearcut, successful in all respects, recommend immediate action to carry out further plans.
2. Visible effects greater than TR.
3. Visible effects about equal to TR.
4. Visible effects less than TR but definitely positive.
5. Radius of immediately apparent damage, (in yards).
6. H
7. KO
8. NA
9. Conditions normal in airplane following delivery, proceeding to regular base.
10. Trouble in airplane following delivery requires us to proceed to indicated point.

Baker
Line

11. Technically successful but other factors involved make conference necessary before taking further steps.
12. Doubt as to whether delivery was made to planned target.
13. Apparent functioning in an unprofitable portion of target.
14. Very little visible damage
15. Conditions immediately after delivery unfavorable for accurate estimate of results.
16. Not clearcut to judge because did not observe personally, and witnesses require further questioning.

Cast
Line

21. Apparent technical failure.
22. Returning with unit to indicated place due to weather.
23. Returning with unit to indicated place due to mechanical trouble in aircraft.
24. Returning with unit to indicated place due to electrical trouble in unit.
25. Returning with unit to indicated place due to damage to aircraft.
26. Okinawa.
27. Iwo Jima.
28. Destination.

(Tibbets: "Parsons and I both agreed that the explosion was more than expected and in sending out the report we emphasized this. We sent the report out about five or six minutes after the explosion. Then everybody went to sleep, or rather took turns catching cat naps. It was about a 7-hour trip home and none of us had slept for about 36 or 40 hours. There was no particular amount of conversation on the way back.")

Parsons: "After turning for home, everybody relaxed. I was afraid that this sort of complete relaxation would bring on trouble. While we were flying along fat, dumb and happy, many things could happen. I suggested this to Tibbets and he immediately tightened up the crew.

"Shortly after this the Navigator, Van Kirk, reported seeing a fighter. The crew acted fast, jumped to their stations, and instantly had everything manned. You could see from this what a fighting crew they were. They had flown combat missions in Europe together many times before. They were well seasoned. Tibbets increased the speed until we were making over 300 miles per hour as we gradually lost altitude.

"The plane turned out not to be a Jap. I think that it probably was a Navy F6F fighter, for we were well past the coast at the time. The men kidded Van Kirk about this later—reporting a Navy plane as enemy.

"Aside from this there was no flurry. Hiroshima had been reported to be heavily defended by flak, but we weren't fired at."

(Tibbets: "We hadn't expected opposition over Hiroshima because we came in high and fast, above the effective combat level of the Jap fighters. Someone said he saw six or eight AA bursts but they were 3 or 4 miles away.")

Parsons: "We landed back on Tinian about three in the afternoon a little over 12 hours after take-off. There were a whole flock of people there. We then settled down to the interrogations and to the job of getting the reports out."

Thus the prosaic tale of the men who made more history in half a day than mankind may be able to understand for a generation. Thus the story of the dropping of the bomb.

4

The story of the receiving of the bomb is here synthesized from the shocked memories of half a dozen survivors. The Japanese Army High Command, if shocked (or shockable, any more) calmly appraised the

missile as a 4-ton block-buster. Even the civilians in the Cabinet couldn't swallow that, so the Army's ordnance experts revised their guess to a 100-ton bomb in one jump of imagination. Even after President Truman identified it and Japanese scientists confirmed it, the military refused to admit the possibility of nuclear fission in bomb form, and stubbornly prevented surrender.

5

The citizens of Hiroshima thought themselves rather lucky. While other cities of Japan were being systematically gutted by massive incendiary raids, their city remained unscarred. True, there had been two small attacks, one in March by four or five carrier planes and one in April by a lone B-29, but the damage had been infinitesimal. Often they had seen large flights of American planes passing over the city on their way to other targets, but none of them ever opened their bomb bays over Hiroshima.

People were at a loss to understand this. Some believed that the Americans didn't attack because Hiroshima had one of the largest Christian communities in Japan. Some thought the reason was that a large number of Japanese-Americans had relatives in Hiroshima. Nevertheless, the Hiroshima authorities thought there was no need in taking chances. Five evacuation programs—a sixth was then in progress—had reduced the population from a war high of 380,000 to 245,000.

Hiroshima had contributed much to the war. As headquarters of the Second Army and of the Chugoku Regional Army, it was one of the most important military command stations in Japan. Also it was the site of one of the largest military supply depots and was one of the foremost military shipping points. However, owing to sinkings and to the mining of the Inland Sea, shipping had at this time all but stopped. During the war new industrial plants had mushroomed up around the edges of the city.

The city is located on the fan-shaped delta of the Ota River, whose seven mouths divide Hiroshima into six long fingers of land that extend into a bay at the western end of the Inland Sea.

At 7:09 A.M. that morning an air alert had sounded throughout Hiroshima Prefecture. Most workers were already in the factories. The school children were helping build firebreaks in the streets before their lessons began, and their teachers marshaled them to shelters. Three B-29s had

been sighted approaching the city. The "all clear" was sounded at 7:31 A.M. People looked at their watches as they came out of their shelters and hurried toward their places of business. The downtown districts were soon filled with people going about their daily work.

At a Kure Navy Yard, 2½ miles west of Hiroshima, a war worker happened to look up at the sky at 8:16 A.M. He describes the sight: "I saw a single enemy airplane flying over Hiroshima. It released, or fired a brilliant object. I thought at first that it was an incendiary bomb, but then I saw something that looked like a smoke ring from a funnel gradually falling toward the ground. It grew larger almost immediately and increased in brilliance and soon covered an area almost equal to that of the city of Hiroshima. A flame appeared which was even brighter than the sun. I thought I might get hurt so I fell flat on the ground . . ."

Another man noticed ". . . what appeared to be an enemy B-29 turning to the right at a high altitude as it proceeded northward directly overhead. Immediately afterward I saw what seemed like an incendiary bomb exploding to the rear of the plane (in the sky to the south). It was followed by a flash. Thinking it was an incendiary bomb, I started to take shelter in the station building but had gone only a few steps when I felt a tremendous concussion strike me from behind. I immediately fell to the ground and covered my face . . ."

Other survivors said the explosion resembled a vast combustion of magnesium that filled the whole sky. The flash was of several seconds' duration and was accompanied by an overpowering heat wave. The flame was described as multicolored—greenish-white, yellowish-red.

6

In the center of the city a violent blast of overpowering heat and wind followed the flash, knocking down trees and telephone poles, tearing sheets of metal from buildings, stripping trees of their branches, derailing streetcars, squashing or knocking over buildings. Few people in the downtown area heard any noise, yet those on the outside of the city heard a low rumble.

The entire city was darkened by a thick pall of smoke and dust, and survivors literally couldn't see their hands in front of their faces. An expanding mushroom-shaped cloud covered the entire city. Quickly it rose and within minutes towered 20,000 feet high. The color of the column

was gray and white while the ball on top was white tinged with crimson.

The living blinked their aching eyes. Hiroshima had disappeared. In its place was a trash heap.

Thus perished a city and was born a new age. Between 70,000 and 80,000 people were killed, an equal number injured. The lucky were the dead. Of the 200 doctors in Hiroshima, 90 per cent were casualties; of the 1,780 nurses, 1,654 were killed or injured; of the 47 hospitals, only 3 could be used.

7

The Japanese government still silent, three days later, on August 9, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Japan.

"Captain Kermit K. Beahan was the bombardier on the second flight," recalled Tibbets. "Beahan is a big, good-natured Texan who could break your back with one hand but who wouldn't hurt a soul without provocation. He was an experienced man. He had been with me in Europe and had over 70 combat missions. It was the first combat mission for the other men in the plane crew. I told Sweeney (Major Charles W.), the pilot, that Beahan, because of his experience and in spite of his being only the bombardier was to be in charge of the flight and if anything out of the ordinary came up to ask him what to do. This is what actually happened. They ran into a little trouble with the weather . . ."

The bomb-bearing plane did not head for Nagasaki, for that city was only the secondary target. The primary target was Kokura at the north end of Kyushu overlooking the Shimonoseki Straits.

"The navigator made landfall perfectly," said Sweeney. "We passed over the primary target but for some reason it was obscured by smoke. There was no flak. We took another run. Again smoke hid the target. 'Look harder,' I said to Beahan, but it was no use.

"Then I asked Commander Frederick Ashworth, Bomb Commander and Weaponeer, to come up for a little conference. We took a third run with no success. I had another conference with the commander. We had now been over the target for about fifty minutes. Our gas was getting low, so we decided to head for Nagasaki. There we made 90 per cent of our run by radar. Only for the last few minutes was the target clear . . ."

In the sky over Nagasaki at 1102 there was a tremendous flash of blue-white light which resembled a giant magnesium flare—then a rush

of heat and a tremendous roar. The monstrous, swirling peach-colored cloud billowed into the sky while a bluish haze spread over the ground.

Nagasaki had been atomized.

The Nagasaki Prefectural Report describes what happened to the city: "Within a radius of 1 kilometer from ground zero, men and animals died almost instantaneously from the tremendous blast pressure and heat; houses and other structures were smashed, crushed and scattered; and fires broke out. The strong complex steel members of the structures of the Mitsubishi Steel Works were bent and twisted like jelly, and the roofs of the reinforced concrete National Schools were crumpled and collapsed, indicating a force beyond imagination . . ."

At Nagasaki the scale of destruction was greater than at Hiroshima, but because of the uneven terrain the actual area destroyed was smaller, more or less confined to the valley over which the bomb exploded.¹ Casualties, too, were lighter—between 35,000 and 40,000 killed, and 40,000 injured.

8

Americans not only had a bird's-eye view of the Nagasaki bombing. There were some who had the unenviable distinction of seeing it from the ground. One of them was a Navy man, Jack J. Madison, Motor Machinist's Mate 2/c, prisoner of war.

Madison's adventure started on Bataan when the Japanese first overran the Philippines. In the general withdrawal from the peninsula to Corregidor, Madison had a boat shot out from under him and was forced to swim the last 1,000 yards. When the Americans "yanked up the bed sheet" on Corregidor, Madison was taken prisoner along with the thousands of others. He was shipped to Japan, arriving on Thanksgiving Day, 1942, still clad in his thin khakis although the temperature was a crisp 20 degrees above. On the 1st of January, however, in celebration of the national birthday—in Japan everyone becomes a year older on January 1—the Japanese issued burlap clothes to the prisoners.

In February Madison began working in a steel mill unloading coal and steel barges. He got very proficient with his coolie "yaho pole" and could carry 300 pounds in his two baskets.

¹ At Nagasaki 1.8 square miles were destroyed, while at Hiroshima the figure was 4.7.

Before long he found himself in the prison camp at Osaka. Life wasn't very pleasant, in fact he thought that "there was no prison camp worse than Osaka." In his original group of 500 prisoners taken at Corregidor, only 125 survived. These survivors became so tough that they "couldn't be killed with a pickax."

Prison conditions were worse in Japan than they had been in the Philippines, for it seems as if the civilian camp authorities in Japan were much tougher than their Army counterparts in the Philippines. Occasionally the Army would inspect and the camp authorities would have a nice meal laid out besides having the shelves of the storehouse well supplied. As soon as the inspectors would leave trucks would roll up and everything would be hauled off. The usual daily ration was 350 grams of rice, turnips, carrot tops, turnip tops, or some sort of soup.

At first there were cigarettes to be had. Often men traded their food as much as a week in advance for cigarettes. Many died from dysentery. All suffered from beatings. The guards carried wooden Samurai swords with which they would beat the prisoners for infractions of the rules. Another favorite beating instrument was a split bamboo pole. Men could be beaten into unconsciousness with that without its leaving a mark.

"If the Nips ever wanted anything," said Madison, "they could get it by shaking down the American barracks. I remember one time they even got a pair of pliers. But they were one-track minded. If they were looking for beans, for example, and found knives, they would leave the knives.

"We could follow the war by talking to the guards. For instance, they would tell us that 'We just kicked a lot of Americans out of the Philippines last week' or 'The Americans lost a lot of ships at Okinawa.'"

Then in May, 1945, the B-29s came to Osaka, which was Japan's second industrial city. "They bombed right up to the camp door. Some of us sat on the roof and watched the fires. The next day they moved us out. But evacuation was rather difficult. We had four trains bombed out from under us. We had American lookouts on top of the train and when they shouted, we all hit the ditch. There were only four Nip soldiers for the entire train. They weren't worried about our running off, because if we were found more than a mile from where we were supposed to be, they just shot us. They were always ready to shoot Americans."

Then it was hard work for Madison in the coal mines that honey-

combed western Kyushu. He didn't seem to mind, for, as he put it, "If you just set around it'll kill you, but if you work you'll thrive on it."

On that fateful day, August 9, 1945, Madison was working in a coal-washing pit on the outskirts of Nagasaki. With him, shoveling at the thick gummy silt, were four Javanese and a couple of Englishmen. A civilian Japanese guard stood watch over them.

"It was a fairly nice day," recalled Madison, "not much different from any other summer day. We heard the air-raid alarm sound and we looked up. There was one plane. No one paid much attention to it. We thought it was just another photo plane. The Japs ran at the sound of the alarm, but we couldn't run until the guard told us. The guard yelled 'Kuda' which is a rather harsh word meaning among other things 'get back to work.'

"We worked for about fifteen or twenty minutes more. The next thing I knew I woke up on the other side of the coal pile wondering how I got there. The Javanese and Englishmen were still with me when I woke up, but our guard had gone, thank Christ. They were scared as hell and so was I. One of the Englishmen just kept mumbling to himself, 'Oh bloody blimey! Oh bloody blimey!'

"I thought we might have taken a direct hit. A concrete and steel structure only 150 feet away was all twisted up. I had a sore head and a pair of cracked ribs. For four days afterwards I felt as if someone had cracked me a good one behind the ear. We stayed at the pits all night. There were fires as far as we could see in all directions. It looked something like Osaka burning. The next morning some soldiers came and took us away . . ."

9

The INDIANAPOLIS will never become a museum exhibit.

For all that the Pacific was an American pond, and American destroyers could pirouette deep in Japanese bays and harbors, the atom-toting cruiser was sunk by a Japanese submarine when July 30 was five minutes old, on her way to Leyte from Guam.

Traveling unescorted, INDIANAPOLIS zigzagged until dark and then settled into a straightaway course through the night. No enemy forces of any kind were reported in the well-traveled area.

But there was a never-say-die Japanese submarine, by incalculable

chance, lying awash at right angles to the cruiser's course and at precise shooting distance. Virtually all the submarine skipper had to do was fire his torpedoes when INDIANAPOLIS steamed into position. Two hits put the cruiser down by the bow, her entire communications system knocked out so that all orders had to be passed by word of mouth. And it wasn't many minutes before Captain Charles B. McVay, III, had to give the final order, "Abandon ship!"

How many of the men aboard took to the water, no one can tell, or guess reasonably closely. In the end, 15 officers and 301 enlisted men survived, rescued in floating groups miles apart in the final days of the week.

The INDIANAPOLIS was unable to radio her swan song. No one missed her. Four days after the torpedoing Lieutenant Wilbur C. Gwinn, piloting a Ventura on a routine reconnaissance flight, just happened to look down at a sea he knew was empty, to see a long trailing oil slick. He followed it, and discovered in the greasy path the head and shoulders of life-jacketed men. He sent out a call for rescuers, and over the next two days 320 men were picked out of the sea, of whom four subsequently died.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Victory in the Pacific

I

PRESIDENT TRUMAN ANNOUNCED on August 7 that the Hiroshima destruction was caused by a single atomic bomb. On the same day Japanese scientists confirmed the news to the Emperor. The Imperial General Staff, stubborn in its doubt, refused to let the news be made public. On August 8 a paragraph appeared in the heavily censored newspapers merely describing the new missile by name, which, of course, meant nothing to the average person.

Ambassador Naotake Sato telephoned from his Moscow post that day that he was going to see Molotov on the morrow. Early in the morning of August 9 he delivered the Soviet's message. Not peace. More war.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Sakomizu suggested to Premier Togo that the Cabinet had two courses of action. It could resign or it could take "some positive action."

Togo answered, according to Sakomizu's notes, that resignation was unfeasible because it would take two or three days to form a new Cabinet. He said that the only courses left to follow were to declare war on Russia and fight "until the entire nation was destroyed" or to accept the Potsdam ultimatum.

The Premier and Foreign Minister Suzuki asked for an audience with the Emperor, without the military present. It was the first time in all Japan's history that a decisive decision was made by civilians, and that decision, the Emperor said, must be for immediate peace.

A meeting of the War Cabinet was called immediately, at ten o'clock on the morning of August 9. Still the War Minister and the Chiefs of Staff wanted to dicker, holding out for a conditional surrender that ruled out military occupation of Japan by the victors.

The Nagasaki bomb disturbed but did not interrupt the debate. Finally the Emperor, who had neither constitutional nor traditional right to make a decision or even to express an opinion without Cabinet consent, took the issue in his own hands:

"To stop the war on this occasion is the only way to save the nation from destruction . . . I decide this war shall be stopped . . ."

The Cabinet ministers sobbed aloud.

It was 3:00 A.M. of August 10. Through the Swedish and Swiss governments, acceptance of the surrender terms short of depriving the Emperor of his throne was formally sent to Washington, but now that the decision was made, the Japanese government wanted more speed than diplomatic routine afforded. It took to the radio.

(Between July 15 and the surrender, over 10,000 carrier planes dropped 4,600 tons of bombs and 22,000 rockets on carefully—leisurely—selected Japanese targets. From Okinawa, 820 Super-Forts of General Kenney's Far East Air Force scattered propaganda leaflets with their bombs on Japan's six largest cities.)

Late afternoon on August 10, Radio Tokyo broadcast the first surrender proposal, in English, to America. It took nearly 12 hours for the official offer to reach Washington through Switzerland, the intermediary for the U.S. and China. Sweden was acting as intermediary for Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

" . . . The Japanese government is ready to accept the terms enumerated in the joint declaration which was issued at Potsdam on July 26, 1945 . . . With the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as sovereign ruler."

In some cities the announcement brought premature celebration. Elsewhere, especially in Moscow, London, Chungking and Washington, the proposal was carefully studied. What to do with the Emperor—a most important question. At first Russia and China were afraid that he had permitted and condoned the war crimes. After twenty-five hours, all parties had agreed upon a formula and the Allied answer left Washington for Tokyo.

You can keep the Emperor but he will take orders from us, was the gist of the reply. "From the moment of surrender the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate the surrender terms," was the official wording. " . . . The ultimate form of government of Japan shall, in accordance with the Potsdam declaration, be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people."

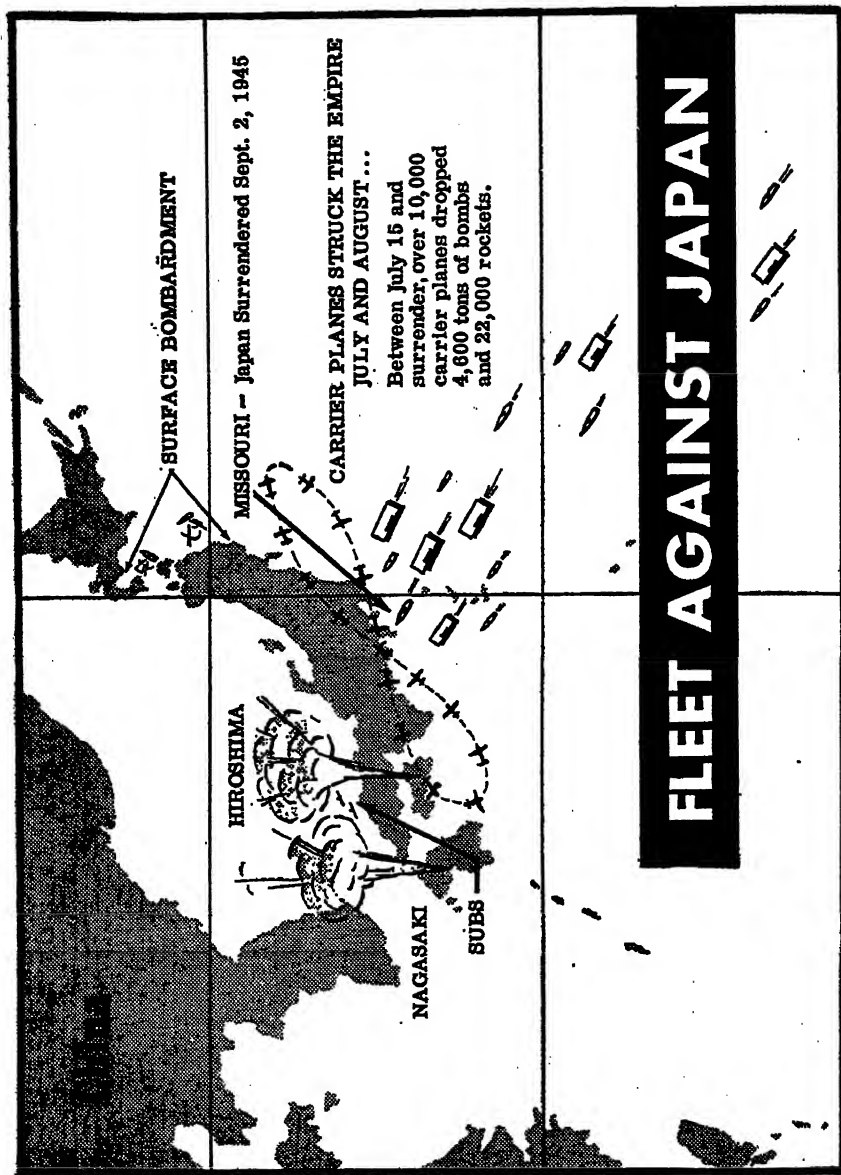


FIGURE 8

2

The first news of Japan's peace offer did not come aboard Admiral Halsey's flagship, the *MISSOURI*, dramatically or in a single electrifying announcement, according to one of the staff members, Lieutenant Dana R. Bergh. "The carrier plane strikes had gone off so smoothly that movies were being shown in the wardroom. As the radioman copied the flash from San Francisco, Brenda Joyce had just emerged in her sarong from Tarzan's penthouse, deep in the heart of Africa. No one noticed the Executive Officer, Commander Malone, go to the telephone and return quietly to his seat whispering to those nearby that rumor had it something big had broken in Tokyo. No one left the movies. Brenda Joyce and Esther Williams on the screen represented a higher priority than did another unconfirmed, unofficial report that the Japs were yelling 'Uncle.'

"After the movies, about 10:00 P.M., a messenger handed a type-written copy of the latest Army News Service release to Admiral 'Mick' Carney who was relaxing with his 'Dirty Tricks Committee' around a large green table in the flag wardroom. The Admiral read the message silently at first and then started reading aloud. ' . . . Through the Swiss government, Japan stated that she is willing to accept the Potsdam terms provided that declaration does not compromise the prerogatives of the Emperor as a sovereign ruler.'

"Commander Harold Stassen questioned the prerogatives of a sovereign ruler under an unconditional surrender. Admiral Halsey's first comment was neither disappointing nor out of character:

" 'Have we got enough fuel to turn around and hit the bastards once more before they quit?'

"Coffee cups were refilled and a good spirit prevailed in the wardroom. Commander Gil Slonin, known as 'Tokyo Mose' because he could speak Japanese, sat for a moment in concentration. Then he stood and strolled out of the room humming the tune, 'Please Don't Say No, Say Maybe.' "

3

After announcement of the surrender negotiations was made to the whooping crews by the chaplains of the fleet, there was nothing left but to turn in, wait and hope.

August 11 was just another fueling and market day. Communicators enjoyed a new popularity, other officers hoping that they for once would "give with the real dope." Similarly, junior staff officers were welcomed to the coffee table of ships' company seniors, it being assumed that if Admiral Halsey had not personally conferred with his staff lieutenants and "jay-gees," they had at least overheard their seniors. There was something more than ordinary this time, however, for the dispatch boards, overnight, had doubled in thickness, and now covered almost any subject including PWs, hospital ships, whole blood, small arms, sanitation, military government, staff cars, movie film, interpreters, wire recorders, protocol, official visits . . . and weather searches.

Forming a thousand miles to the south was another of Japan's seasonal typhoons. Task Force 58 was scheduled to strike Tokyo again on the 12th, but more depended on the red-penciled swirls that were being laid out on the huge strategic chart in flag plot than peace negotiations between Washington and Tokyo.

Before midnight the strike was canceled. The winds were headed north.

Dawn of the 12th brought more restless waiting, but the typhoon had obligingly abated. Once more officers and men debated the issues of the day, the most effective manner of continuing the offensive as the "on with the war" faction gained momentum over the "wait for an answer" group. They argued such questions as: Atomic bombs and B-29s vs. carrier planes' 1,000-pounders and 10-inch rockets; the wiping out of entire cities and their civilization vs. pin-point destruction of strictly military objectives; the risk of a relatively few airmen carrying atomic bombs vs. the risk of a larger number of naval pilots carrying conventional explosives. Opinion was sharply divided then, as it still is.

The majority agreed that the enemy shouldn't be given time to catch his breath. Among them was Admiral Halsey, who would have been a majority had he been alone in the opinion. He signaled Admiral McCain the following: "Unless the Nips beat us to the punch by throwing in the sponge attack Tokyo area tomorrow . . ."

From midnight on the 12th to 5:00 A.M. a series of dispatches from Admiral Halsey to his fleet indicated how the military pendulum was swinging back and forth.

At midnight: "Cancel strikes . . . Maintain strong defensive CAP. Situation not clear but developments may occur rapidly."

At 2:00 A.M.: "If the enemy searches or snoops I intend to order immediate attack."

At 3:00 A.M.: "Strike as originally scheduled."

The situation finally resolved itself at 5:00 A.M. when Admiral Halsey radioed Admiral Nimitz: "Tokyo is under carrier plane attack."

4

All day long Radio San Francisco optimistically talked of the certainty of peace while Task Force 38 continued with the war.

August 13: 21 planes were splashed near the task force, 12 snoopers and 9 Kamikazes. Not one enemy aircraft penetrated 38's fighter defense and destroyer radar pickets. Meanwhile strikes from the carriers were aimed at shipping, locomotives, hangars, industrial buildings, repair shops and warehouses in the Tokyo area, but sparing the city itself.

Fueling on the 14th brought less rest than more impatient waiting. The exchange of official notes was a fine thing, but it seemed much more plausible to get on with the war.

Admiral Carney summed up the feeling when he jotted down the first line in his night order August 14: "Peace be damned! Back to Tokyo tomorrow." After McCain got his orders from Halsey he wrote a fighting message to all his carriers:

"Show to all pilots. The fact that we are ordered to strike indicates that the enemy may have thrown an unacceptable joker into the surrender terms. This war could last many months longer.

We cannot afford to relax. Now is the time to pour it on."

At daybreak August 15 the fast carriers launched their first strike and were met over Tokyo by 45 airborne enemy planes, 26 of which were promptly splashed in aerial combat. As the second strike sped to the target the pilots' ears buzzed with the shrillness of the message in their headphones: "Cease fire, cease fire . . . The war's over, cease fire."

5

"When the 'flash' was received," according to Lieutenant Commander LeRoy W. Vance, Fire Control Officer aboard the *MISSOURI*, "a large group of fighters and bombers was just approaching Tokyo. By

radio they were notified to jettison their bombs and return to the carriers. Meanwhile, bedlam had broken loose in the task force. Escaping steam left white trails behind stacks, as the noise of hundreds of whistles pierced the air. On decks the crews danced and hugged one another in joy. Engineers took turns relieving each other below decks so all the 'Black Gang' could see the show. Every ship broke out its largest ensign and the men vied with each other to see who could shout the loudest."

Topside on MISSOURI Commander Harold E. Stassen, standing the 8-to-12 watch for Commander Third Fleet, was writing it all down as it happened:

0800 Steaming as before. Position 34-00-00 North Latitude 142-11-00 East Longitude. 0804 Received news flash that President Truman had announced Japan's surrender. 0840 Early morning strikes returning and landing as directed. 1055 Received orders from Admiral Nimitz to cease offensive operations against Japan; but to continue searches and to beware of treachery. 1110 Broke out MISSOURI's Battle Flag and Admiral Halsey's Four Star Flag and began sounding ship's whistle and siren. All ships in the task force followed the motion. Admirals Halsey and Carney on the bridge to witness the event. 1113 Admiral Halsey ordered the signal 'Well Done' hoisted to fleet. So closes the watch we have been looking forward to, unconditional surrender of Japan, with Admiral Halsey at sea in command of the greatest combined fighting fleet in all history! As he stands on the bridge I can see a gleam in his eye that is unmistakable.

Signed,

H. E. Stassen

Although peace had been declared, it was necessary to maintain vigilance and readiness for action. If it had taken five days to reach an agreement on how the surrender terms would read, it might take much longer to convince the Kamikaze pilots, especially those who had already signed burial certificates. In anticipation of the enemy's reaction, McCain radioed Halsey that he was complying with CINCPAC's order to end hostilities, but if enemy planes came near TF 38 they would be shot down.

"Affirmative," replied Halsey. "All snoopers will be investigated and shot down, not vindictively, but in a friendly sort of way."

After the Admiral's instructions were passed to the airborne fighters one of the pilots asked his wingman, "What does the Admiral mean, 'not

vindictively!" The reply came back with hardly a pause, "I think he means for us to use only three guns instead of six."

6

Admiral Halsey's victory speech was scheduled for 1:00 P.M.

Twenty minutes before he began, a destroyer on radar picket reported several bogeys closing from the northwest. Admiral Halsey's plans had been interrupted once too often by the Japanese. He personally had written out his speech in longhand; he was ready to speak and, Nips or no Nips, he was going to speak. With bogeys still closing, the voice of Admiral Bull Halsey rang out: "Men of the Third Fleet, the war is ended . . ." ¹

If the Admiral had planned the Japanese part of the act, he couldn't have made it any better. Just three minutes after he started talking, the first plane was splashed by friendly fighters; a few minutes more, another and another. The fourth and last enemy plane was shot down by destroyer gunfire just after the Admiral finished his speech, a very appropriate bouquet for the orator of the day.

"Cease fire" was seven hours old when three more bomb-carrying Judys were picked off by an alert CAP. Final score for VJ-day was 38 shot out of the air.

Now the two problems most immediate were recovery of the allied POWs and occupation of Japan.

Both tasks were military gambles, for no one knew how the Japanese people would react when they met their conquerors face to face.

Japan was roughly divided into three areas by Commander Third Fleet so that his fast carrier planes could conduct continuous surveillance flights over the strategically important island of Honshu.

T. L. Sprague's TG 38.1 covered Honshu north of the Tokyo plain; Radford's TG 38.4, the Tokyo area, and Bogan's TG 38.3, southern Honshu and part of Shikoku. Some squadrons located and supplied PW camps; some flew CAP for the first occupation forces and others patrolled Japanese airfields, and watched ship movements.

"But there never was a dull moment," said Admiral Sprague. "One day we discovered two I-class submarines trying to make a northern port. After running both of them down and placing prize crews aboard with instructions to bring them into Tokyo Bay, a third submarine was seen

¹ See Appendix for Admiral Halsey's complete text.

surfacing directly in our path. After identifying the boat as friendly I asked the CO what he wanted.

" 'I just wanted to see with my own eyes what a fast carrier task force looked like,' replied the young skipper, Chester Nimitz, Jr., who like most submarine skippers had never seen the fast carriers in operation because for mutual protection submarines and carriers were never permitted in the same operating zone."

7

There is one misery of war which is never so fully appreciated by those not suffering it as other vicarious experiences.

It is easy to imagine the excitement of battle, and both the labor of preparing for it and the strain of waiting for it. It is not hard to put oneself, in mental image or the written phrase, in a hospital ship or surgical ward. But the mental and physical torture of the prisoner of war is beyond the conjuring ability of anyone who has not endured the horror of such confinement, of being a hated and despised captive in an alien land, cut off from all news of home and homeland, abused and over-worked.

As soon as the cease-fire order was given, the airplanes over Japan searched for new targets, the prison camps, and the bomb bays were loaded with strange missiles—chocolate, cigarettes, sausage, vitamin tablets.

"The first flights over Japan went in 'loaded for bear,' " according to Rear Admiral Thomas H. Robbins, Jr., at the time Captain of the *LEXINGTON*. "We didn't know what to expect; maybe flak, maybe fighters.

"Aboard ship we were on pins and needles waiting for the reports from that first strike. When the strike leader, a hardened combat veteran with many decorations, reported to me on his return, tears were streaming down his face.

" 'This is the greatest day of my life,' he said.

"There had been no AA fire, no enemy fighters, only hundreds of white-shirted men insane with joy. The crew of the *LEXINGTON* nearly went mad as they got the news from the returning fliers. I can't describe their feeling of exaltation, when for the first time they had eyewitness testimony that the war was really over, and that many of our prisoners were still alive. They had been told that the enemy had surrendered but

still we stood our watches at battle stations and blacked out the ship at night. But this was firsthand evidence. Prison camp gates were open! The war was really over!

"Our men started making food bombs immediately. Some were rigged with parachutes and others were just padded. We put everything in them that we thought they could use, canned meat, canned milk, sugar, candy, cigarettes and even toothbrushes, tooth paste and soap. We also printed up a special edition of the *LEX*'s paper including two full pages of comics."

8

The carriers continued to make daily food strikes until the POWs were evacuated, but the evacuation is another story. Let one of the officers who did most of the evacuating tell you about it. He is Commander Harold E. Stassen, Chief Staff Officer for Commodore Roger Simpson, who was in charge of the evacuation group.

"Together with Captain Ralph Wilson and Commander Douglas Moulton, we started preliminary planning for evacuation in July, just after I returned from the San Francisco Conference. Planning was accelerated as time went on as there were increasing indications that the Japanese strength was folding.

"Suddenly the Japanese surrendered and Admiral Halsey ordered me to join Commodore Simpson, CTG 30.6, and carry out the plans as approved. Speed was most essential and if no serious opposition developed we would proceed at once to get the prisoners out to the hospital ships where we could feed them, bathe them, and give them medical assistance.

"On August 26 Commander Moulton and I flew from the carrier *INDEPENDENCE* to Atsugi airport, contacted the Japanese command along with advance units of General MacArthur's command to get additional information as to the location of PW camps. We told the Japanese we were coming in promptly with hospital ships, landing craft, and doctors.

"The Japanese had little additional information; they simply confirmed the facts which had already been established by the carrier pilots immediately following the 'cease hostilities' order. After the carrier planes spotted the camps they had not only made food drops themselves but had relayed the information back to the Marianas so that B-29s could bring heavier parcels of clothing, food and medical supplies.

"By using blinkers, improvised signal flags, and by writing on the ground, the men had communicated with the aviators spelling out such messages as 'Food,' 'Medicine,' and 'Many men ill here.'

"When all preliminary planning was completed, Admiral Halsey sent us a signal. 'Those are our boys—go and get them.'

"On September 1, following behind the minesweepers with the sweeper *REVENGE* appropriately in the van, we went as far as we could aboard the *SAN JUAN* accompanied by the hospital ship *BENEVOLENCE*, two APDs, and four destroyers. Then we put down the landing craft loaded with doctors from the Third Fleet, including Commodore Joel T. Boone, fleet surgeon.

"Fighters from the *INDEPENDENCE* flew air cover while TBFs led our landing craft, all manned by combat experienced coxswains, through the narrow crooked channels to the first camp, Omori, near Tokyo.

"The PWs had no real word about when they would be rescued. From gossip overheard between Japanese guards, they knew the war was over and, from a few camps, the men had seen the U.S. fleet steam into Tokyo Bay.

"When they saw our landing craft approaching, they waved their arms and cheered, and some jumped in the water and started swimming out to meet us. In the distance we could see others waving American, British, and Dutch flags which they had improvised. It was an extremely emotional scene as we were the first free men that these prisoners had seen, in some cases, since the fall of Bataan. Many of these men had suffered cruel, sometimes inhuman treatment, and now all of a sudden they were to be liberated. As we pulled alongside the dock, a large group came down to meet us. Among them was 'Pappy' Boyington, the Marine ace who was presumed dead, and Commander Maher, a survivor from the first *HOUSTON*. Altogether we took 600 men from this camp.

"'Where are the men who need medical attention most?' we asked them.

"'There's another camp about a mile from here and if you want the men who need attention first, they need it worse than we do,' they told us.

"Shinagawa was the camp they were talking about. With two Japanese guards Commodore Boone and I took a Jap truck and went by land to this place. It was a hellhole! Most of the men were ill; the medical prisoners had no mattresses. They slept on their bare bones in wooden bunks three tiers high. In this hospital the men were bedridden but with

no beds. Without exception they were all very thin and emaciated wearing old and tattered dungarees. They were bearded and dirty because there were no shower facilities. American PW doctors had not been permitted to care for the sick; instead they had been forced to shovel coal and work in the rice fields. One man had been dead 48 hours and still unburied. Commodore Boone stayed at Shinagawa while I went to get the landing craft and a burial party.

"We evacuated men all through the night from those two camps. Many of them were so sick they couldn't walk up the gangplank of the hospital ship and had to be hoisted aboard in a litter which was rigged over the side. When there was time they told us stories of the sadistic beatings which they had taken from the Japanese guards. It seemed that pilots and submariners had been beaten the worst. By dawn the first two camps were cleared.

"Next day we started working our way toward Yokohama and ran into camp Kawasaki-Buncho. It was here that we had some trouble with the Japanese officers in charge. Our attitude when we went into a new camp was a very positive one. We knew what we wanted to do and proceeded to do it.

"The Japanese Colonel in charge of the camp said, 'I have no authority to turn the PWs over to you.'

"'You have no authority, period,' I replied. And the Colonel said nothing further, just sort of faded out.

"As we were loading these PWs—Americans, British, New Zealanders, Dutch, and Canadians—into the landing craft, a young PW stepped up to me and in a strange dialect asked, 'What should we do?'

"'Who is we?' I asked.

"'We are the officers and men of the Italian Navy,' was the reply. 'We were the crew of an Italian submarine cruising in Japanese waters when our country surrendered and the Japs interned us.'

"They were loaded aboard like the rest and we reported them to COMINCH.

"So now we had practically all the Allies, plus the stray Italians.

"If there had been armed opposition or gunfire our orders were to withdraw, and the air cover would report same to the ships in the bay. Fortunately the planes had nothing to report.

"At Yokohama we met groups from General Eichelberger's Eighth Army as they fanned out to the inland camps. An Army hospital ship, the

MARIGOLD, had been brought into the same picture. From this day on, it was a joint Army-Navy operation.

"Some PWs were well enough to be loaded on planes and flown down to Guam for processing and transshipment back home. Others were able to leave their camps and make their own way down through the countryside to our ship. As the camps in the Tokyo area were cleared, we started westward and soon discovered there were numerous camps on the western coast in mountainous regions which our planes had failed to spot. Japanese and American mines prevented us from dispatching ships around to the western coast immediately. So Japanese trains were the only way left to get them.

"In a flight of a couple of TBFs escorted by four fighters on September 3, I took an Eighth Army officer, an American PW officer, who had been up in the western camps, and a Japanese corporal to the western coast of Japan. It was a rainy, cloudy day and our weather information was not too good, nor was our radio communication back to the carriers steaming on the east coast. Because of the low cloud cover, we flew out to sea and came in under the weather, landing at a big airport near Niigata. The Japs came out to meet us, somewhat surprised. It was the first time any Americans had been there. Our interpreter told the Japanese officers to take us to the Kempii Headquarters (the Emperor's secret police) as we had instructed him. The Kempii were the only Japanese officially permitted to carry arms after the capitulation, and they, only to keep law and order.

"In a little old Japanese passenger car, the Japanese officers motored us down to Kempii Headquarters where we issued our orders. We told the police that we had come to get our prisoners, that we would require trains to do the job, and that we would need them all scheduled within the next forty-eight hours. They protested that there was a severe shortage of equipment, that what they had was badly needed to continue scheduled services. The Kempii, of course, were overruled. We told them we didn't care where or how they got the equipment, *but to get it*.

"We visited all the PW camps in that area and told the men to be steady, that they would be evacuated in a few hours. They were instructed to get good water, to fill their canteens (which had been dropped from the air too) and along with C rations that had been dropped to prepare for the rail trip across the island where hospital ships awaited them on the east coast.

"In the presence of the Japanese camp commander we placed the senior officer prisoner in command of his camp. Japanese guards remained around the camps to help the prisoners, but without arms. We were afraid of rioting because of the emotional state of the men. One Marine, who had been a PW for some time, asked 'When do we shoot the guards?' We were afraid too of rioting between the PWs and civilians as the trains moved across the island, for they would pass through cities and villages which had been completely obliterated by our bombings.

"Because of bad flying conditions we decided to return over the railroads ourselves. This would allow us to check the railroads and make preparations to receive the men on the other end at Tokyo. All the trains were unbelievably jammed with people moving out of Tokyo and demobilized Japanese soldiers going home, but no one offered to cause trouble.

"When we arrived in Yokohama we got set to receive the trains at Yokohama which began rolling in the next day. Altogether seven trainloads of PWs pulled in from western Japan, all of them arriving without incident. After this we went from one camp to another, Enshu Bay, Sendai Bay, and Kamaishai, all over Japan until we got them all.

"The whole job took us 17 days and we took out 14,000 men. Altogether there were 23,000 PWs evacuated from Japan. We lost only one PW, an Air Corps Major, and we tried desperately to save him. He was put under an oxygen tent and given blood transfusion, but he was too far gone."

9

With hundreds of Hellcats, Corsairs, and Seafires flying triumphantly above, Allied carriers, battleships, and their escorts accompanied by scores of transports and auxiliaries began moving into Japanese coastal waters on August 26 before steaming into Sagami Wan the next day to await and then support the scheduled landings at Yokosuka, Yokohama, and other points along Sagami and Tokyo Bays.

Major occupation forces landed early morning of August 30 with Marines and Army airborne troops hitting Japanese soil almost simultaneously. Under command of Brigadier General William Clements the first Marine unit to land, the 2nd Battalion of the 4th Regiment of the 6th Division, went ashore at Futtsu Cape, on the eastern shore of Tokyo Bay

opposite Yokosuka. It was a fitting tribute that the 4th Marines could be the first to land on Japanese soil. It was the old 4th that had fought at Bataan and Corregidor until every man had been killed, wounded, or captured.

At 35 minutes past 9:00 in the morning with all the heavy guns of the anchored fleet trained ashore, 9,000 Marines, 1,200 bluejackets, and 450 British marines and sailors landed at Yokosuka Naval Base, August 30—using the main seaborne landing. Half an hour later the cruiser *SAN DIEGO*, flagship of Rear Admiral Oscar C. Badger, docked at the Japanese naval base. At 12 minutes past 11:00 A.M. surrender of Yokosuka was accepted by Rear Admiral Robert B. Carney.

Meanwhile the 11th Airborne Division had established a perimeter around Atsugi airfield and had occupied Yokohama in preparation for the arrival of General MacArthur, who was expected in his personal plane "Bataan" that afternoon. Major General Joseph M. Swing, Commander of the 11th Airborne, was the first of his division to set foot on Japanese soil. Under cover of Army and Navy fighter squadrons, C-47s and C-54s landed at the rate of 20 planes an hour. Except for a few bursts of antiaircraft at one of the transport planes, all the landings were made without incident.

Occupation forces spread smoothly and swiftly. Troops from the 11th Airborne took up their stand on the south banks of the Tama River and awaited the official surrender ceremonies before moving into Tokyo. In a driving rain Marines landed at Tateyama Naval Base, at the eastern entrance of Sagami Bay, to prepare for the arrival of the Eighth Army the next day.

The stage was set and the curtain ready to be drawn for the formal surrender, fittingly to be held on the deck of the battleship *MISSOURI*.

"Stage is correct terminology," said Lieutenant Commander Vance. "Extensive rehearsals, in the best theatrical tradition, were held each day. Two hundred and fifty sailors, playing the roles of Admirals and Generals, practiced the rehearsals. Details included practice of rendering appropriate honors to each Allied dignitary, the proper placing of each, and the assistance to be given the hundreds of newspaper and radio correspondents covering the story. Neighboring ships, after their first startled reaction, became accustomed to the unorthodox routines aboard the 'Mo.' Their initial wonderment was easily understood, for among the strange sights that met their eyes was that of a bluejacket ascending the gangway, and

a moment later the breaking out of a red flag with five white stars—the flag of a General of the Army!

“At one rehearsal a dungaree-clad seaman, duly instructed in his role as Fleet Admiral Nimitz, was told to descend the ladder and then come aboard as if just arriving. On his return trip as he prepared to set foot on the quarterdeck, his startled gaze took in a double row of eight sideboys, the Officer-of-the-Deck, the Commanding Officer, the Ship’s band, and a ninety-man Marine Guard of Honor—all standing stiffly at attention for him. Rooted to the spot in amazement, the seaman could only push his hat back and mutter, ‘Well, I’ll be Goddamned!’”

This was the last rehearsal. Now for the actors and the play.

IO

By 9:00 A.M. all the Allied and Japanese dignitaries had taken their places aboard the *MISSOURI*, flying the flags of Fleet Admiral Nimitz and General of the Army MacArthur. Twelve signatures on a piece of paper about 12 by 18 inches, the Articles of Surrender, officially brought an end to the Pacific War, which had entered its eighth year in China and for all other Allied powers, except the Soviet Union, was approaching its fourth anniversary.

On behalf of Emperor Hirohito newly appointed Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu limped on his wooden leg to the surrender table, and nervously signed first for Japan. Next was General Yoshijiro Umezu, signing for the Imperial General Staff. Umezu, unlike the Foreign Minister, sat down resolutely and affixed his signature without delay. As he signed, however, a Japanese colonel wiped tears from his eyes.

As Supreme Commander for all the Allied Powers, General of the Army MacArthur signed next, attended by Lieutenant General Wainright and Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival, the British commander who had been captured at Singapore. Both generals had been recently released from a prison camp near Mukden, Manchuria.

General MacArthur then called upon the other signatories in the following order:

For the United States—Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

For China—General Hsu Yung-chang.

For the United Kingdom—Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser.

For the Soviet Union—Lieutenant General Kuzma Derevyanko.

For Australia—General Sir Thomas Blamey.

For Canada—Colonel Lawrence Moore-Cosgrove.

For France—General Jacques LeClerc.

For the Netherlands—Admiral C. E. L. Helfrich.

For New Zealand—Air Marshal L. M. Isitt.

Twenty-five minutes after the signing began, the surrender had become history. The Japanese government had agreed to the following terms:

(1) We, acting by command of and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, hereby accept provisions in the declaration issued by the heads of the Governments of the United States, China and Great Britain July 26, 1945, at Potsdam, and subsequently adhered to by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which four powers are hereafter referred to as the Allied Powers.

(2) We hereby proclaim the unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and of all Japanese armed forces and all armed forces under Japanese control wherever situated.

(3) We hereby command all Japanese forces, wherever situated, and the Japanese people to cease hostilities forthwith, to preserve and save from damage all ships, aircraft and military and civil property and to comply with all requirements which may be imposed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by agencies of the Japanese Government at his direction.

(4) We hereby command the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters to issue at once orders to the commanders of all Japanese forces and all forces under Japanese control, wherever situated, to surrender unconditionally themselves and all forces under their control.

(5) We hereby command all civil military and naval officials to obey and enforce all proclamations, orders and directives, deemed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers to be proper to effectuate this surrender and issued by him or under his authority, and we direct all such officials to remain at their posts and to continue to perform their non-combat duties unless specifically relieved by him or under his authority . . .

(6) We hereby undertake for the Emperor, the Japanese Government and their successors to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration in good faith, and to issue whatever orders and take whatever action may be required by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by any other designated repre-

sentative of the Allied Powers for the purpose of giving effect to that declaration.

(7) We hereby command the Japanese Imperial Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters at once to liberate all Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees now under Japanese control and to provide for their protection, care, maintenance and immediate transportation to places as directed.

(8) The authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the State shall be subject to the supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate these terms of surrender.

Even before the formal surrender in Tokyo Bay, the Japanese commander of Milli Atoll in the Marshall Islands had surrendered to Captain Harold B. Grow on August 22, aboard the destroyer-escort *LEVY*, flagship for Commander Harry E. Cross's Cortdiv 11. This was the first formal surrender of any of the by-passed islands, the first in fact in the history of Japan.

Other island commanders followed the motion and surrender ceremonies swept across the Pacific in whirlwind fashion, with Japanese commanders folding as fast as Allied officers could accept them. The once mighty enemy naval base Truk was surrendered to Vice Admiral George B. Murray without incident aboard Captain Lyman A. Thackrey's heavy cruiser *PORTLAND*.

Thirty minutes after the signing of the surrender on the *MISSOURI* a 42-ship convoy steamed into Tokyo Bay and began disembarking troops. By nightfall 13,000 troops from the 1st Cavalry Division had landed. By the evening of September 3 over 720 square miles of territory had been occupied in the Tokyo area.

Five days after the formal Japanese surrender General of the Army MacArthur entered Tokyo and hoisted the United States flag over the American Embassy.

It was the same flag that had flown over Washington, D.C., December 7, 1941. It had been hoisted over Rome and Berlin as those Axis capitals fell in turn, and had been flown aboard the *MISSOURI* during the surrender. Now it was flying over Tokyo.

Victory in the Pacific, by the Grace of God, had been achieved.

Appendix

Complete text of Admiral Halsey's Victory Speech as broadcast to Third Fleet during Kamikaze attack, August 15, 1945:

Men of the Third Fleet, the war is ended. You, in conjunction with your brothers in arms, of all services and all branches of all services, have contributed inestimably to this final result. You have brought an implacable, treacherous, and barbaric foe to his knees in abject surrender. This is the first time in the recorded history of the misbegotten Japanese race that they as a nation have been forced to submit to this humiliation. I said in 1942 the Nips were no supermen. You have helped write finis on that estimate in 1945. Your names are writ in golden letters on the pages of history—your fame is and shall be immortal. Wherever you have met the foe, on the sea, on the land, in the air, or under the water, you have been supreme. Whether in the early days, when fighting with a very frayed shoestring, or at the finish, when fighting with the mightiest combined fleet the world has ever seen, the results have been the same—victory has crowned your efforts. The forces of righteousness and decency have triumphed. At this moment our thoughts turn to our happy and fortunate homeland, to our loved ones. Deeply rooted in each and every heart is a desire, now that the tumult and glory of war has ceased and victory—absolute and unconditional victory—has crowned our efforts—to return to our homes. A simple process of thinking will demonstrate how impossible this is at the moment. The boredom, the homesickness, the periods of fear, the tragedy, the sweat, the blood we have shed so freely have been endured by all and shared with fortitude and brotherly comradeship and gladly. This is a common and proud possession of each and every rank and rating. We are, and shall always remain, a band of brothers, tried in the fire of the greatest holocaust this world has ever experienced, and because of this, indissoluble. That which we fought and bled and died for has become a reality. That reality cannot be, must not be transient, it must rest on firm foundations. The structure that we build must be so firm that the storms of all ages to come cannot touch its surface. Because of your fighting qualities and the fighting qualities of our brothers in arms of all services, our beloved land has not known the ravages of war; our dear ones at home have not been endangered. Give praise to God Almighty for this and give humble and grateful thanks that He saw fit to use us as His instruments. Victory is not the end—rather it is but the beginning. We must establish a peace—a firm, a just, and an enduring peace. A peace that will enable all decent nations to live without fear and in prosperity. A

peace that will glorify the inherent dignity and nobility of mankind. Never again should we permit the enslavement of decent human beings—never again should tyrants be permitted to rise in a civilized world. To attain this requires unremitting toil over a period of years. To the end that our land and all lands may be saved the ravages of wars, that the coming generation and generations yet unborn may be spared the sacrifices and savagery of armed conflict, a solid and enduring peace must be established. The enemy over the entire world is conquered and bows his collective knee in humiliation to us—the victors. He is unregenerate. It is our cross—our duty—to make him regenerate. This can not be done in a day. It may take decades and generations. The present and immediate duty of the Third Fleet is crystal clear. We must in conjunction with all Allied forces so employed—reduce Nippon to military impotency. We must keep them militarily impotent. This should not be a difficult undertaking. Following this it is imperative that instrumentalities be set up to educate and divorce the Japanese from their barbaric traditions, teachings, and thoughts. This is a matter of common sense, good judgment and policy, and will require military might for implementation and very wisest understanding statesmanship. The time necessary to attain this goal is unpredictable. When the fighting ends—there must be no letdown. We shall have long and trying periods of very watchful waiting. A busy man is a happy man. It behooves all in authority to take this to heart. Plans should be in the formulative period now—plans that provide work, study, and recreation. This is not only constructively necessary for the upkeep and preservation of our splendid ships, but imperative for the morals of our incomparable fighting men. I wish it were possible for me to meet, greet, and know each officer and man of our Fighting Third Fleet. Owing to its size and dispersion, this cannot be. You shall always occupy a special and honored space in my mind and heart. We have been through this trying time together. We have shared the good, we have shared the bad. We are brothers—blooded by our active participation in combat operations in an unprecedented naval war. When the time comes, many will return to civilian pursuits. Keep the torch burning. Join your forces in the pursuit of righteousness and decency. You have been tried in a cruel crucible—you have—thank God—been proved not wanting. Let no man tear down that for which you have sacrificed so much. Your civic responsibilities will be great. Meet them with the same fortitude you have displayed during this war. Then shall our great land be safe and sound. You that remain in the Navy—keep your swords sharp. You accept a great responsibility. The great traditions and the constant state of preparedness of this—our first line of defense—are in your keeping. Maintain your powder dry, and anticipate every new development. The applications change—but the principles of war are immutable. God grant that we may never have to apply them again. A ready and efficient fleet is one of the greatest deterrents to the horrors of war. To you all I say—I shall always be ready and glad—within my means—to render any advice, assistance, or succor. And finally—God bless and speed each and every one

of you. There are no words to a sailor man more expressive of the highest commendation than the Navy's "Well Done." With great pride, gratitude, and thankfulness, I give to each and every one of you my sincere and heartfelt "Well Done." To our fighting brothers of the British Pacific Fleet, my eternal gratitude for your efficient and generous services. I am proud—very proud—to have had you under my command during this last combat period of the Western Pacific War on the seas. We—who knew you—expected great fighting qualities. Our expectations have been more than fulfilled. Your co-operative spirit, your manner of meeting and anticipating our wishes, the way you have adopted and fallen into our scheme of maneuvers is little short of remarkable. The co-ordinated offensive and defensive fighting on the surface and in the air makes us in fact a single fighting team. Again I am very proud to have had this fleet and its splendid fighting personnel under my command. "Well Done" and may God bless you. To the officers and men who have fought with and under me during the earlier stages of this great war, greetings. In the early raids, with nothing but indomitable courage and hope to support us, we left our mark on a cruel and treacherous enemy. We paved the way—we blazed the trail—for the overwhelming victories that have followed. To the officers and men of the incomparable SOPAC fighting team, my greetings. With little to start with, we bore the brunt of the Japanese eastern-most offensive in the Solomon Islands. We stopped them dead in their tracks. With little more military power—we forced the Nips back on their heels and drove them from their ill-gotten gains. This team was composed of the Army and the Navy (that great and incomparable fighting outfit—the United States Marine Corps—I am proud to say is a branch of the United States Navy) of the United States, and was ably assisted and supported by ground, surface, and air forces of the Dominion of New Zealand. This New Zealand fighting personnel, and what fighters they are, these New Zealand ships and planes were supplied unstintedly within the limitations imposed by their obligations to the forces in Europe. Despite their overwhelming needs in the Southwest Pacific, the Australian government supplied some few personnel. Notwithstanding their sparsity in numbers, their contribution to the success of our campaign was written large. These services, and branches of services, were integrated into a great fighting team. They knew and permitted no service jealousies. They operated as a perfectly trained team, and history has recorded the accomplishments of that fighting team. When I relinquished command of the SOPAC area, I predicted we should meet on the road to Tokyo. Fourteen months later we have met and fought together many times. Soon—very soon—we shall meet again—this time in Tokyo. Despite many repetitions, I again say "Well Done" and God bless you. I should be very remiss if I did not pay tribute to my very wonderful, able, brainy, and efficient staff that it has been my privilege to have during the nearly four years of this war. They have been my mainspring—my guiding force. For our successes—and they have been many—they bear the chief responsibility. They

have worked long and unstintedly. The children of their brains—have grown into the adult victories that have followed their conception. Many have come and gone, many new faces have joined, but their combined planning and work goes on continually. They have all contributed with all the means in their possession. In addition to their serious work, they have contributed delightful and lasting companionship. To my two splendid Chiefs of Staff—to all members past or present—a heartfelt “Well Done” and God bless you. You have my undying gratitude. I am one of the oldest, if not the oldest, living naval officers actively engaged in any combat zone in the world. I have been greatly privileged and honored to have been entrusted with so many active and key combat commands. That fades into insignificance in comparison to the honor of commanding the splendid personnel over whom I have been placed. In the history of our great nation, we have never produced finer, more courageous, or greater fighting men. To those of us who have suffered injuries or been permanently maimed my gratitude and thankfulness that you have been spared for further useful activeness. May a grateful country never forget the sacrifices you made for the good of all mankind. To those of our brothers that have given their all—who have made the supreme sacrifice—Hail, Rest with God. You will never die. Your names and your deeds will rest with and be an inspiration to all decent mankind through all ages. “What greater love hath a man, that he give his life for his country.” To your loved ones, my deepest sympathy. May time assuage your grief, and bring a full realization of your dear ones’ immortal fame. I have spent a long life in the Navy and my career is fast closing. I would not change one minute of it. It is with more than a twinge of sadness that I realize that my last active sea duty is about ended. It is with great humbleness and humility—that I review my part in the historic events of the last four years. My pride in my commands, my pride in the magnificent personnel I have commanded, and my pride in our successes is unbounded. No man could close his sea-going career with greater satisfaction. To you belongs the credit and I shall do all within my limited powers to see you receive it. Again and again—God bless you and “Well Done.”

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